SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

FALL 1982

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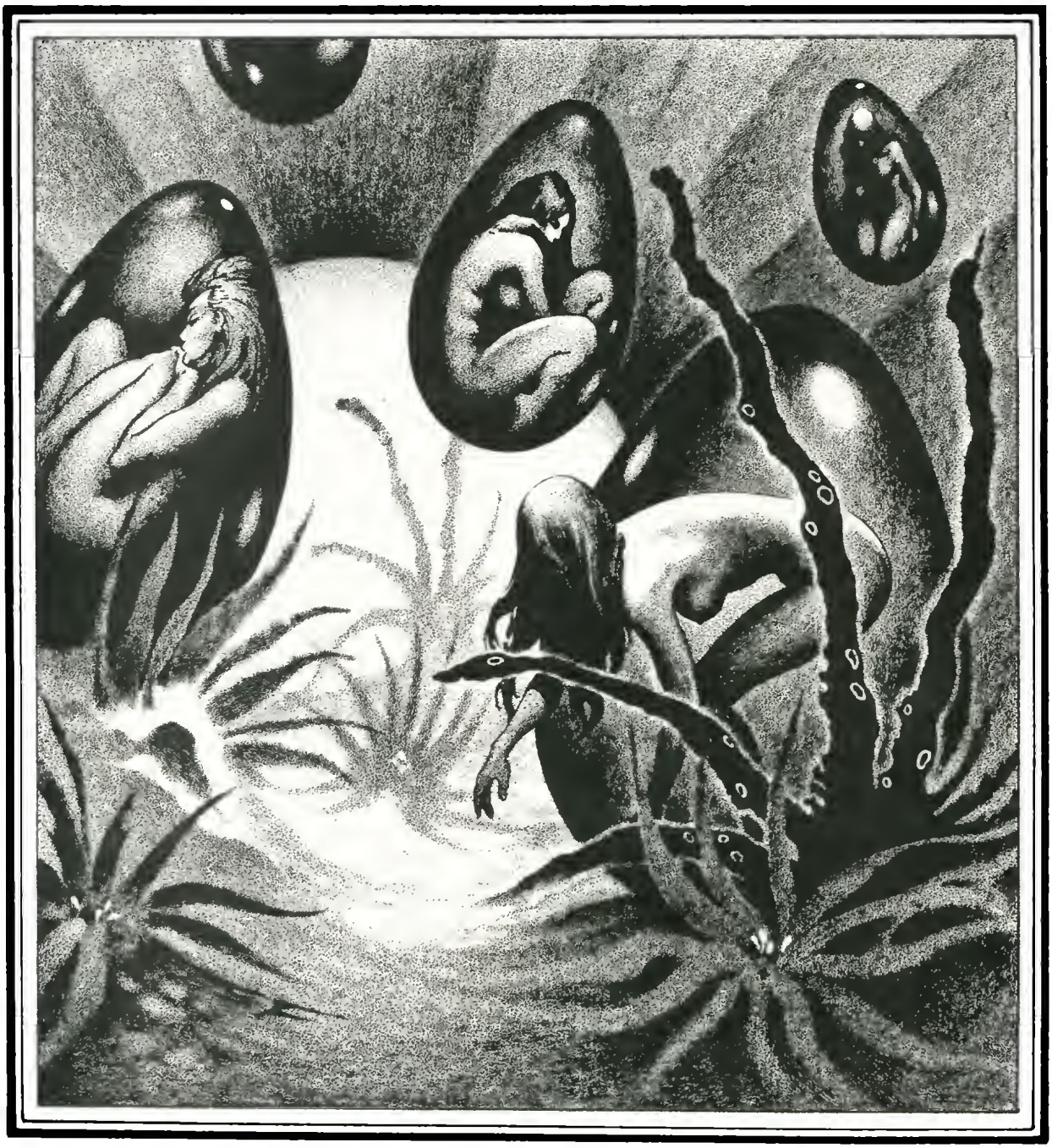
INTERVIEW: *ANNE McCAFFREY*

FANTASY AND THE BELIEVING READER **BY O.S. CARD**



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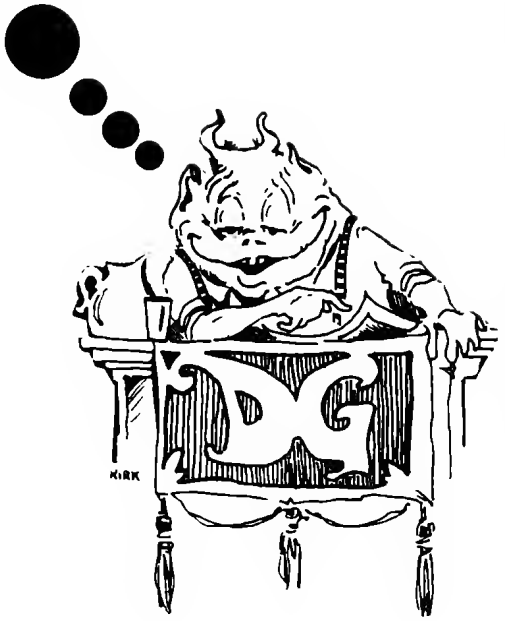
BY THE EDITOR



THE RETURNING PLAGUE

is attacking the book publishing industry. According to a WALL STREET JOURNAL story July 2, returns from bookstores are reaching 70% of shipments in some instances, with 50% returns common.

The ideal percentage of returns is about 15%.

At the same time hardcover sales are down: 15% from April 1981, and 13.4% in May, from a year ago.

The story says, 'It is a situation in stark contrast with that of the 1960s and early 1970s. In those years the industry was expanding rapidly, aided by huge infusions of conglomerate capital, new mass-marketing strategies and cheap money. However, as the 1970s drew to a close, and increasingly in the last two or three years, the conglomerates began insisting on better business performance from their book divisions, and marketing money dried up; at the same time the unit cost of books rose steeply, making them less appealing to a public that was counting its pennies.'

At Simon & Shuster, publisher and executive vice president Dan Green says of the heavy rate of returns: "

Richard E. Snyder says of the heavy rate of returns: "If this continues through the Christmas season, you're going to see many booksellers and publishers fail or be forced into mergers."

What is happening is that conglomerates need high profits to pay off their huge debts and to simply pay interest on their debts. They have been selling off pieces of their empires---mergers are indeed taking place, book divisions are being sold off---Playboy, Fawcett, Ace....

As times get tougher we can expect to see more hardcover and softcover book publishers dealt away, combined, even disappear.

A year or so ago it seemed that editors were playing a game of musical chairs as they moved from publisher to publisher. Now actual publishing companies are engaged in that game.

So we'll watch the papers and the stats and see what happens up to and after Christmas, to the publishing industry.

Judging from the steady influx of review copies, the science fiction lines [more accurately described as fantasy lines] are still selling well enough to justify continued heavy production.

The summer's success of sf/fantasy movies will help sf/fantasy book sales and convince publishers those lines are worth continuing an d perhaps even expanding. Apparently the hardcore sf/fantasy hardcore readership continues to expand and continues to buy.

The assured continuation of the STAR WARS, STAR TREK, SUPERMAN and perhaps CONAN movies in years ahead suggests a continually expanding (or maintained) readership accumulation. If the Big SF and fantasy movies are only going to be released at Christmas and early summer, the intervening months will perhaps drive the hungry-for-sf movie fan to the sf/fantasy bookracks.

NO NEWS IS THE BAD NEWS

in SFR this issue. There is no SF News column and there won't be one next issue.

Elton Elliott has had increasing difficulting getting adequate cooperation from publicity directors and editors in New York, and cannot afford to make dozens of phone calls to track down stories or info on new releases, etc.

Then, too, he is Tired. He is burned out at the edges. And he wanted to do an opinion column in SFR, for a change.

And so in this issue is his new "Raising Hackles." It should raise a few in the readership.

I realize there are many SFR readers who valued highly the news column, especially the listings of forthcoming books.

To those people I advise a subscription to Andy Porter's SF CHRONICLE, since Elton tells me that SF CHRONICLE has the best, most complete new books listings of the big three sf/fantasy newszines.

I receive FANTASY NEWSLETTER, SF CHRONICLE, but not LOCUS, since LOCUS' publisher, Charlie Brown, refuses to trade with mere fanzines or even semiprozines. (I'll never forgive him that.)

Anyway, the address for SF CHRONICLE is P.O. Box 4175, New York, NY 10017.

I don't know the price; Elton has my copies of the magazine. But I'm fairly sure Andy Porter will send a sample copy of SF CHRONICLE for $2.

[Now I'll get an indignant letter from the editor of FANTASY NEWSLETTER.]

I may as well add here that I have no intention of adding a news column by anyone else. SFR will concentrate on being an opinion-review zine.

THE WRITER AS A SCRIPT PLAYER

makes sense if you understand Transactional Analysis and agree with its tenets.

According to TA we all carry three emotional modes into which we can shift as our internal needs dictate: the Child, the Adult, and the Parent.

We also are given Life Scripts as children, by our parents (or those who raise us). Some Scripts are good: You'll be a winner! This kid will make a lot of money! She'll make some man very happy!

And some are terrible Scripts: You worthless little bastard! You'll grow up to be a tramp like your mother! I wish you were dead!

And some are so-so: Scripts that impose limits on success, love, talent.

To fulfill the Scripts people play life games. There's the ever-popular Alcoholic game, the Drug game, the Sex games, the Kick Me game, the Rape game [played by men and women], the Everybody's Against Me game, the Now I've Got You, You Sonofabitch! game...

It's a fascinating way to look at human character, personality and their imperitives. At least a dozen books have been written about TA since Berne's bestseller GAMES PEOPLE PLAY of about 20 years ago.

Life Scripts are working, one would think, in writers who choose

to write for small press fiction outlets and [always for "good" reasons] avoid the larger markets; who choose a style and technique of writing which forces their work into small niches; who are content to write low-pay genre fiction all their lives; who aim for the Big Bucks and get them; who antagonize publishers, editors, agents all the time!; who hit big with a successful book, then screw up endlessly and ruin their potential....

The curious thing is one can see these Scripts operating in others, but most always are blind to the Script in one's own mind. Of course, if it's a good Script, you wouldn't want to change it. But ofttimes your Script is negative or limiting ("Don't try to be a big wheel, son, you'll only get into trouble.") and even if you do recognize it on an intellectual, rational level, the power source of the Script is out of reach, somehow.

[That has been the key failure of all emotional problem therapy systems---neutralizing or reversing the deepset emotional commands that rule us from their unconscious or subconscious fortresses. nothing seems to work very often or well.]

Sometimes the passage of time does the trick---perhaps the Script command system rots away (figuratively) or shorts out, or loses power somehow, and one is freed to be a different person. More often an emotional trauma fuses the Script or causes a deeper love-of-life set of priorities to override the Script and disconnect it.

Sometimes a great despair causes us to trade in the old Script for a new one---as in adopting a selfless cult religion, or in giving oneself body, mind and soul to a cause, a leader, a state. (These require closed minds, for once doubt enters, the old Script will be back in power or, worse, there will be no Script at all---terror for the weak-ego, other-directed personality. Another overwhelming focus for one's life must be found immediately!)

So if you are a writer or wish to be, consider the markets, your talent, your ideas...but above all consider your Script.

THE FINAL PLUNGE...

will take place, it now seems to me, in 1983-84. The Democrats will probably score big gains this November in the congressional off-year elections, and will try to spend the nation out of its deepening economic problems.

But adamant idealogue Reagan will be forced to frustrate them by vetoing every spending bill. The two forces will likely cancel each other out.

The Demo victory at the polls will frighten what little liquidity is left in this country into even shorter-term treasury bills and money-market funds.

Here's the scenario: the Treasury Dept. needs to borrow, in the next 12 months, at least 100 billion dollars to finance the federal deficit.

Yet it is reliably estimated that there is only about 112 billion dollars of debt-free savings in the country available to be borrowed.

The Treasury will/is crowding out the businesses which desperately must borrow to finance new stocks of goods for their shelves, to pay interest of huge existing debts, and buy new machinery and often to pay salaries and wages until new inventory is sold.

All of this demand for money will bid up the price of the dwindling supply, and interest rates will hit new post-World-War II highs. This squeeze is called a "credit crunch" or liquidity crisis. The time will come, probably before Christmas, when some businesses will be unable to borrow at all, and will go out of business.

This will all be masked by claims and counter claims, propaganda, lies, dogma.

But once the debt structure has sucked up almost all the liquidity in the country [and the world, to a large extent!], the bubble self-destructs by forcing up interest rates to the point of killing off its hosts.

Unemployment, less money to spend, bankruptcies all kill money by reducing sales, values, prices. As the private sector diminishes in profits and in bankruptcies, in salaries and wages lost, the federal deficits soar and compel a cutback in those deficits else the Treasury be forced into flat-out monetizing of ever more and more of that debt---printing money, pure and simple, which would result in a fevered, pure, hyper-inflation and instantly destroy any ability by anyone to borrow money at any price. In a hyper-inflation you spend all money instantly, before it loses value. [And it will lose value, by the week, day, hour, minute!]

The point of all this is to show the inevitable, inescapable cycle that operates once a debt structure reaches a certain size relative to the economy and the reserves of cash available to support it.

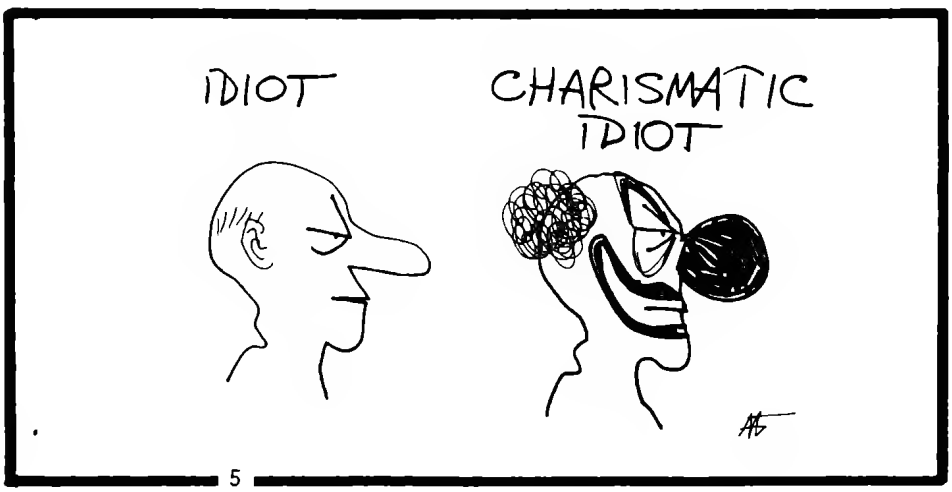
The more the deficit is cut the more the economy contracts, the more taxes shrink, which, like a receding tide, uncovers more and more deficit...

To compensate for the on-going collapse of the private debt structure, the federal government would have to run deficits of...$500 billion per year? A trillion dollars per year? Those deficits could not be financed, and unless financed the value of the dollar would plumet worldwide which would cause import prices to escalate, cause foreign holders of U.S. govt. debt to dump it, cause a huge surge in the cost of living, in domestic prices....

Cause and effect, cause and effect...chain reactions.... The financial world is an ecology; screw up one aspect and it ripples through the interrelationships causing consequences unexpected and deadly.

Especially in economics, THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH.

For this country, and most of the world, credit has turned its other, hideous face to us and become debt.



And the cream of the jest is that even if Jimmy Carter had been re-elected, and if the Democrats had not lost control of the Senate, the dynamics of the debt cycle would have us just about where we are now anyway.

Reagan's tax cuts are a sham; the 5% cut at the end of 1981 was eaten up by increased Social Security, state and local taxes. The tax cut of July 1, 1982 has been eaten up by more Social Security tax increases, more state and local tax increases, and price increases forced by increased excise and other use taxes.

Congress gives you a piece of steak to eat with one hand, and cuts a pound off your ass with the other.

The fact is this year's budget is larger than last year's! The government is taking in more money in taxes this year than last! Federal spending in the past few years has become an uncontrollable monster and will [in league with an exraordinarily large private debt structure] soon result in a financial collapse of unparalleled size and duration.

Woe, woe. Doom, doom, doom. I love it.

GEOPOLITICS, LIES AND STRATEGY

are plainly visible in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, but invisible to Americans who rely on TV news and newspapers for analysis and implications.

In CONSPIRACY NEWSLETTER last year my co-writer and I estimated that the next Israeli move would be into Lebanon, probably to the Latani River.

What has emerged is a top-level decision to solve the problem of the PLO and the Palestinian refugees by means of a Final Solution.

The strategic aim is to eliminate the PLO and dismember or neutralize the Palestinians as a political/military force. The aim is to restore Lebanon to its former status as a neutral free-enterprise banking and commercial center. There is a geopolitical aim (I strongly suspect) to keep some highly valuable water-source lands in southern Lebanon for Israeli use/possession.

Geo-politically, too, the Israelis have shown that no nation in the near east can stop them from doing anything they wish! As a tool of the American establishment, the Israeli army and airforce is supreme.

The Israeli buildup of arms, men, and machines in northern Israel went on for at least six months. They mobilized their army and airforce, they shifted mountains of supplies to the north... All that was not known was the timing of the move. And for President Reagan to say on TV that he didn't know ahead of time when the Isrealis would invade is an admission of dissembling [he didn't know the exact hour, perhaps], or an admission that he is kept (or chooses to be kept) ignorant of spy satellite information, CIA, NSA, FBI, etc. analysis and reports.

Our government can veto any Israeli plan, policy, attack by threatening to cut off their loans, subsidies, spare parts, bond-selling privileges. Therefore, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was made and is continuin with our government's

quiet permission. And that means the megafortunes, the monster transnational corporations which control our country's foreign policy (and most of its domestic policy) want this to happen. They lost fortunes in Lebanon in the chaos and anarchy that has been Lebanon for the past few years, and they want their property and opportunities returned. Israel is doing the job for them and Israel is getting something in return, count on it. The payoff will emerge as time passes. One obvious benefit would be U.S. tolerance of the continued, gradual annexation of the West Bank and perhaps the Gaza Strip as part of Israel.

Another strategic/geo-political fact which has already emerged from the Israeli invasion of Lebanon is the immense technological superiority of U.S. arms over USSR arms. It is no contest and the Israeli improvements on U.S. arms are without a doubt being incorporated into U.S. planes, tanks, guns, etc.

The Russians are a second class power and would lose a ground war against a well-trained tech western army and air force.

[I have to wonder how many missiles they could launch in an all-out nuclear war; very probably their maintenance, quality control and training levels are disastrously low. With the development of a high-level computerized anti-missile system for defense of this country, even the Russian intercontinental missile threat would be eliminated, returning this country to its Master of the World status again.

PAY ME NOW OR PAY ME LATER...

says Mother Nature, who is the cold, unfeeling dealer in this game of life.

Mother Nature is a anthropomorphic euphemism for Reality, and it may be we use "Mother Nature" to take the curse off the true and terrible indifference of the universe to our individual existence.

Thus we clot together in families and tribes and cities and nations to keep away the deep knowledge that the universe doesn't give a dry fuck if we live or die.

We tend to project a lot, too, in the psychological sense---and hedge our bets---by helping "those less fortunate" [a bargain with God: see how good I am, you must take care of me after I die!] and we also thus set up support systems for ourselves just in case disaster strikes us. We know in our hearts how cruel and indifferent we can be to others [only we becomes them in the costume of "Big Business", "the callous rich", and "stone-hearted conservatives".

So we (in liberal do-gooder short-sightedness) demand people live longer than they wish, demand non-viable infants be kept alive at all costs, and spend vast fortunes attempting to deny reality and impose equality. Thus low-grade morons and imbeciles are pushed toward "normality" and "equal opportunity" straightjackets to satisfy our fear and guilts.

And so---after generations and generations of doing good and being kind to the "less fortunate"---we discover we have created an underclass of dependents who are emotionally and especially mentally and physically incapable of functioning in our complicated multi-leveled technological society and culture.

We can't use them to weed the gardens and do stoop labor; that would be demeaning to them (us). We find we have created an enormous service structure of middle-class employees to care for and maintain this underclass. And these service employees have a strong vested interest in keeping this vast accumulation of useless people in existence, and in fact in keeping it growing.

That's simple: these morons will have babies without end, and will multiply marvelously, forcing ever-greater welfare and support services and employees.

Being 80% morons, these people are inherently credulous and ripe for recruitment by the evangelistic religions who are naturally against abortion. [Abortion is "murder" say they. Abortion is legal; thus it becomes legalized killing of human life. A semantic difference.]

These Christian religions cunningly believe in the perfectability of mankind. Thus they advocate women be forced to carry any and all pregnancies to term, and oppose all sex education and contraceptive information among the morons. Sex is evil they say, and pleasure is a sin [but without sex and pleasure their whole con game would be reduced to the ancient fear-of-death ploy among the old, and that would diminish the revenues greatly.].

And so...and so...we have built in social structures which allow defective genes to carry on and multiply, and we are in our temporary vast-suplus-of-wealth period carrying an ever-growing number of parasites.

We have in cold reality undermined the quality of the human species by greatly defeating the natural selection process.

And sooner or later good old Mother Nature will force triage upon the human race. [Triage is an out-of-fashion, cruel word for the process of culling, pruning, sorting, choosing the best. You will not find it in many modern dictionaries.]

I am not calling here for new, brutal social policies. I am pointing at a reality. In the short run the world with greater and greater difficulty will be able to cope with this underclass, and in the long run we are all dead anyway.

My enemy is social delusion and idealism (often the same thing). I have a function of sorts in a minor way in the debunking area, but the idealist is a permanent part of society--of man's psyche--as is the cynic and the realist. There are those who can be sensitized or alerted to Reality [my particular imperfect version of Reality] and who may benefit from my viewpoint. If so, fine.

But I don't care. It feels good to ventilate once in a while, and these cynical musings and pronouncements on the true and terrible nature of mankind and our condition on this planet is a fine therapy for me. I expect it to at least interest and fascinate and perhaps provoke some readers.

I love that phrase: true and terrible. I owe Barry Malzberg a great thanks for coining it.

The collapse of the debt bubble (which takes at least five years---three or four to go, folks!) is forcing the beginnings of triage now---cutting of welfare, medicaid, food stamps, etc., but only the punishment of underclass women for pregnancies will begin to shrink the gene-defective pool of unemployables and begin to raise the quality of the human stock in this country.

I know, I sound like a racist and a bigot and all the bad names. But I don't believe blacks are inherently inferior to whites or yellows. [I could make a case that the Chinese are the true superior race on this planet, but I'm lazy.] It's likely that white morons and defectives have been multiplying (better protected by white social workers, white Liberals) faster, from a larger base, than blacks.

It'll be interesting to watch the social thrashings and twistings and rationalizations, lies, misstatements that will flow from the need to address the problem of a vast army of unemployables (by present standards) which society must either support, put to work, or put a lid on and let die off.

Tough talk. Tough problem. Like the multi-trillion dollar obligations coming due in the Social Security programs, it'll have to be faced. Mother Nature lets a society get away with stupidity and self-delusion only so long.

THE CORPORATION STRIKES BACK

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HOW THINGS WORK

BY NORMAN SPINRAD

HOW THINGS WORK is the final section of STAYING ALIVE: A WRITER'S GUIDE by Norman Spinrad, to be published soon by The Donning Company. Their science fiction line is edited by Hank Stine.

Unlike the rest of this book, this valedictory essay is not being written as a column to a monthly deadline; rather it is an attempt to put the evolutionary process of the columns into some kind of overall perspective. Since this is a book by someone who openly admits he is primarily a science fiction writer, it might as well be a science fictional perspective.

And in the process of writing these columns over evolutionary time, I think that one thing I've discovered is that there is such a thing as a science fictional perspective on reality, a dialectic that can be applied to such sublimities as the production of visionary art and such practicalities as negotiating a book contract. What this science fictional perspective really is, of course, is a question as unanswerable as "how do you define science fiction?" But I think at root it has something to do with wanting to know how things work.

How things really work, not how some authority figure tells you they work; not the rules of the game, but the game behind the rules. The straight poop, the inside story.

Kids who grow up to be scientists, science fiction writers or investigative journalists, all start out wanting to know how things really work. The scientist wants to know how material reality works, the investigative reporter's ideal is a knowledge of the fine detail of social politics with scientific precision, and the science fiction writer would like to know how both of these realities affect the individual reality of consciousness.

The science fiction writer would like to know this because more often than not he's writing stories set in a future. Since he's writing about a world as yet unknown to either scientific verification or efficient muckraking reporters, he's got to imagine how imaginary changes in social or scientific reality affect imaginary characters. In order to do this with some coherence, he needs a general theory of how things really work.

And the only place he can derive it from is the passage of his own consciousness through reality. So the science fiction writer tends to have the scientist's curiosity about the way physical and cultural mecnanisms work, and the reporter's scepticism about the moral perfection of authority.

Maybe that explains why there is such a magazine as LOCUS, why SFWA is both internally contentious and externally militant, and why I wrote this book.

Re-reading these columns, it seems to me that the basic thrust of all of them has been to investigate how things really work in the art and commerce of publishing.

In another sense, the columns have been a kind of science fiction about publishing, a description of a cultural mechanism and the interaction of its grindings with the art of science fiction. That's material for a science fiction novel, isn't it? At least one has been written, Barry Maltzberg's HEROVIT'S WORLD.

No doubt there are some people who will consider such obsession with the straight poop to have a paranoid component. Learned professors have written treatises on the paranoid component of science fiction. Dr. Strangelove and Dr. Frankenstein are the most prevalent images of science. Reporters are obsessed with discovering evil forces everywhere.

On the other hand, it could be argued that evil forces do exist wherever there is power, that scientific descriptions of reality trouble the spirit, and that the universe really is out to get us, or worse, is entirely indifferent to our destiny.

Certainly science fiction writers have ample evidence to support the paranoid theory that sinister forces are against us. It is plain fact that the literature of science fiction has been walled up in a critical and commercial ghetto for the better part of half a century. In our struggles to breach the wall, though, we have perhaps sometimes lost our science fictional perspective. Or, as Theodore Sturgeon puts it, forgotten to ask the next question.

Which is why.

Why is science fiction considered beyond the sphere of discourse of the New York Literary Establishment? Why has it been genrefied for fifty years under commercial pressure towards a product marketed to juveniles and away from adults?

Why has this persisted for nearly half a century?

There are those who will argue from a genetic perspective that this situation evolved from an unfortunate chance mutation. When Hugo Gernsback coined the logo "scientifiction" for a new magazine in 1926, he was, in a sense, inventing the science fiction genre as a sub-genre of the boy's adventure story. This created a popular mass culture market for a genre that had never before existed as a formula for commercial fiction. That new formula was circumscribed by the general genre parameters of the boy's adventure story. It was a new market. It attracted formula commercial writers. It created a certain image of science fiction, later reinforced by the emergence of science fiction fandom.

By now we all know what that image is. So we can see why it repelled writers who considered themselves to have serious literary ambition. The image became self-fulfilling. Once an image becomes self-fulfilling, it affects reality. And an image powerful enough to alter the reality it epitomizes is bound to be very stable. In a sense, it defends its own existence. Which explains why the public perception of science fiction has until recently remained static through all the internal evolutionary changes of the past half century. Once the literature of science fiction was epitomized by a genre image, as juvenile cult material, all literature in this mode was ghettoized behind that image and not subject to ongoing critical attention from the culture at large. A chance mutation had carved out an ecological niche and then been adapted by natural selection to fit its parameters.

But Sturgeon would still probably insist that we ask the next question. The mutation might have been random, but the fact that it proved viable, the fact that it ended up being selected for, must have been due to the cultural environment. It must have had a cultural reason to exist.

At which point, we must descend from lofty scientific metaphor into *down-and-dirty* pragmatics.

Which brings us right back to how things really work.

I mean, look at the fifty years or so during which science fiction had been a ghettoized genre. Passingly strange. Radio! Television! A world-wide economic depression! Larger-than-life maniacs in power in Italy, the Soviet Union and Germany! A World War! The Atomic Bomb! The Cold War! The Cuban Missile Crisis! The Space Race! The Assassination of JFK! The Sexual Revolution! The Rock Revolution! Viet Nam! The Moon Landing! Transistors! Microchips! Hand-held Computers! TV from Jupiter and Saturn!

Is this not the material of science fiction? Can a literature dealing with this material be anything *but* central to the cultural life of the United States in the 20th Century?

Apparently so. It has been treated that way so far.

But not without cost.

Which brings us back to where we are now.

We do know where we are now, don't we? We're in the United States of America on the planet Earth, pushing, you should pardon the cliche, 1984. We don't seem to understand how to make our modern industrial economy work any more. It can't be because our technological level is declining. We're capable of launching Space Shuttles and creating designer genes. It isn't because we've lost the cutting edge of pure science; our understanding of the physical parameters of reality has never been more sophisticated and comprehensive.

Our economic level has been declining, in that, in national and individual terms, we're poorer than we were, and this as-yet-but-dimly-perceived devolution in standard of living has already sapped the national spirit of its confidence in the upward evolution of our civilization.

Or maybe it's the other way around.

After all, we haven't lost a bit of scientific knowledge or technological technique. It can't even be said we know less about economics than our ancestors.

On the other hand, we do find ourselves in a society where science has become identified with radiation, cancer and militarism, where reason itself is regarded with suspicion as the product of the uptight half of the brain, where the teaching of "Creation Science" has become a serious political issue.

While our arch-competitor, ex-protege, and wistful current role model, Japan, happily relates to its robots as creatures native to a technological environment.

What we've lost that the Japanese seem to have is confidence in a positive ongoing evolution of civilization in a cultural and spiritual sense through science and technology. In the United States, it's become almost embarrassing to suggest in public the possibility that ongoing progressive and enthusiastic development of science and technology is a necessary life-sign of an economically and psychically healthy civilization.

What we've got that the Japanese don't have is a deeply perceived dichotomy in our society between reason and feeling, between logic and emotion, between the things of the spirit and the things of science.

We can barely form the concept that science itself is a thing of the spirit and that "things of the spirit" do not mean magic and the supernatural.

We tend to confuse the scientific method, which is a careful and obsessively objective means for verifying insights into the nature of physical reality and the scientific impulse, which is the spiritual end, the emotional goal behind all this cold analysis. Namely the lust to know how things really work. How all things really work, from the ultimate constituents of matter, to the ultimate knowledge of the universe itself as a synergetic system, to total comprehension of the phenomenon of consciousness itself. One may question the hubris of this transcendent millenial Faustian quest, but hardly the human emotion and visionary longing that motivate it in spiritual terms.

We also tend to confuse screwed-up or imperfect technology with baseness in the goal of technological development. Which, of course, is to use the best current knowledge of how things really work to figure out how to make them work better. Technology will never be perfect until

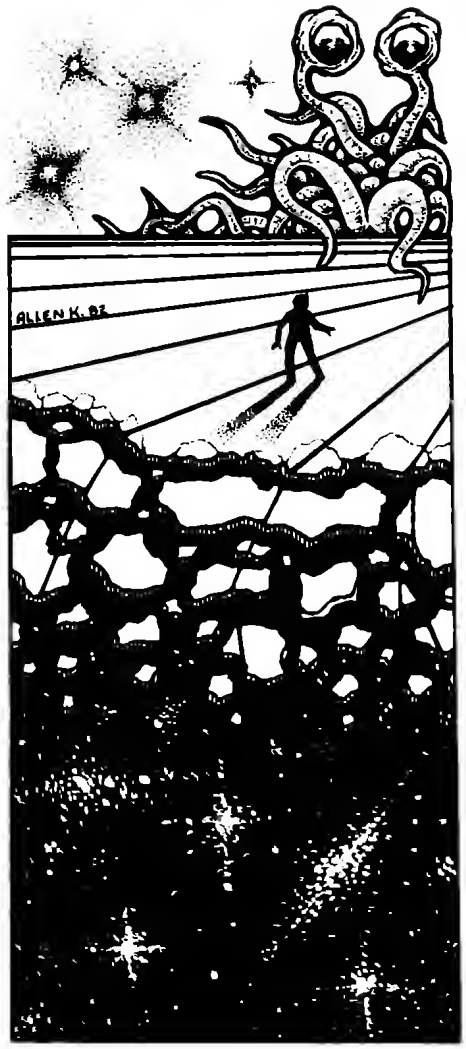
both our knowledge of the universe and our use of it are perfect. Judging from our present state, we can assume that we still have a way to go.

But maybe we can't assume that we're going to get there. Lately we've begun to confuse science with magic, energy with metaphor, the things of the spirit with supernatural forces, how things really work with how we would like them to work. When an individual confuses how things really work with how he would like them to work -- when he runs into a wall in the sublime assurance that his will will allow him to walk through it -- we say he is psychotic. When a culture begins to disregard the parameters of reality, we can only call it a crisis of civilization.

The crisis is neither entirely scientific nor entirely spiritual, for it is precisely a crisis in the *interface* between the things of science and the things of the spirit, between the individual consciousness and the total social and material surround.

This, of course, is also precisely what most science fiction is about, when it is about anything but a rehashing of a basic formula plot skeleton.

This is why any culture which relegates this central discourse to a genre ghetto in order to dismiss it as trivial is in deep shit, because science fiction's sphere of discourse is anything but trivial to the crisis confronting progressive technological and scientific man.



Just how trivial it isn't can be read easily enough by the consequences of its absence from our civilization's main intellectual marketplace. Where a culturally central literature of science fiction should stand, we have a stunted creature shoehorned into a commercial formula and struggling to maintain its integrity. We also have a literature of the impossible donning "sf" drag and pretending to be mimetic, itself the creation of the sf genre formula. Coincidentally, in the society itself, we also have a growing confusion of science and fantasy, a schizoid chasm growing between the things of science and the things of the spirit, and a deadly Cartesian fallacy that they are antithetical.

We lack not only culturally central science fiction, but a cultural worldview that at least attempts to synergize scientific knowledge with the spiritual world of the individual consciousness, human goals and desires with technological power. One that at least attempts to base its perspective of how-it-would-like-things-to-work in how-things-really-work. One that applies the test of reason to things of the spirit, and applies the test of the spirit to what man might do with knowledge and power.

While we have been living through what is in essence a fifty-year science fiction novel ourselves, our "serious literature" has been moving further and further from any perspective close to this; and our popular literature, indeed our popular culture, has been moving further and further towards empty format, towards what Michael Moorcock called in the very title of a science fiction novel, *THE CONDITION OF MUSAK*.

Within the ghetto walls, it has always been a struggle to prevent the literature of science fiction from being reduced to the Condition of Muzak. Yet somehow, the literature never became entirely genrefied into mental background music. Granted, a great ream of such stuff is produced every year, but at least it can still be more or less said that there isn't much good science fiction that goes unpublished because of excessive literary ambition. And that such books more or less still regularly emerge from the wall of noise.

But for the most part these works have not passed into the general stream of the culture. Which thus has a void in what should be a central sphere of intellectual discourse. The results of which are all too visible today.

All the more visible because what the American publishing industry and the American literary establishment caused to happen to science fiction in the past is now happening to fiction, period.

Aside from science fiction, there are a few other small areas of discourse which mainstream publishing, which is to say contemporary corporate committee conglomerate publishing, is keeping in cultural purdah. Fiction exploring the effects of drugs on our civilization. Anything set in the counterculture of the 1960s. Anything centrally about Viet Nam, although that may be slowly changing.

Four central areas of concern, wouldn't you say, for a struggling society trying to figure out where it is, how it got there, and what to do next?

When a society starts developing multiple blind-spots of *this* magnitude, it's already in a devolutionary state, and it's only a matter of time before the next stage begins to take hold: Popular literature (in the extended sense including all media purveying fiction) begins to degenerate into a mosaic of stylized genres where the format is the story, where the formula is the content, where the plot is a Skinnerian mechanism, and where all episodes are interchangeable.

Soon fiction itself ceases to become an arena of discourse for exploration of the relationship between the individual and external reality. In a sense, it becomes the relationship between citizen and social mechanism. It becomes an agent of the social mechanism instead of an inquiry into it. It becomes entertainment. It becomes show business.

Show. Business. Show business. People in show business are in the business of putting on a show. The purpose of putting on a show is to make money. This show that attracts the most customers will make the most money. Therefore one studies the demographics. What kind of show attracts which consumers? What imagery can we key into that is already implanted in the mass consciousness? What plot-sequences exert the maximum appeal? What story-elements

build audience loyalty? What's the best identification figure to use?

You will note that this is exactly the sort of study that is done before a major television commercial is made. Maybe that's where the process started. Commercials are designed to sell a product, not speak to the mind or the spirit. They use all the techniques of art but they are not art because they have no artistic goal. But they taught network television how to design product to sell. Today, episodic television, the form which utterly dominates the medium which utterly dominates the mediasphere, is in effect an endless series of commercials for itself.

This is what it means to quite literally produce a genre. When you have the results of your study, you then design a format around the targeted audience's psychological profile designed to sell the format itself as the product, and hire some writers to do episodes.

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Once you've genrefied enough formats, you've got the total mass audience neatly cut up into demographic slices, each one with a stylized format designed to push its particular buttons, just like a good TV commercial campaign. If you've figured out the buttons right, the audience will be led through a psychologically pleasureable experience, and you will have achieved your goal -- success in the Nielsens. And maximum profits.

Now that so much of publishing has become just another arm of the media conglomerates, this sophisticated bottomline approach to selling product has reached into the more conservative print media.

Even publishers have begun to realize that a sound conservative but sophisticated corporate approach to selling fiction is a lot more sound bottomlinewise than depending on the inspiration of creative talent for your fortune. If the psychological profile of the targeted audience indicates a libidinal charge on physical fear, give them physical jeopardy. If they're fantasizing violence, give them knife-flics and gore. If it's power, give them magic. If it's S&M, there are any number of image systems which will allow them to get off on it without raising them to guilty self-knowledge. Even if it's love, you can genrefy the sequences into romance.

As long as you lead the audience by the backbrain along a skein of events keyed to evoke primal emotions like lust, hate, fear, terror, horrification and blood-lust, you don't have to worry very much about the individual episode or book because you've got the selling format down pat.

Now all this started out being a discussion of the pragmatics of publishing from a science fictional perspective, from an obsession with how things really work, but when you finally do find out how the interface of commerce and art works, you do not end up in Kansas.

Writer or editor, you can hardly be in the business of publishing without encountering moral confrontations with the bottom line. The American publishing industry is moving towards the Condition of Muzak with unseemly rapidity. Is this because the people in charge are black-hearted villains out to rot the brains of the nation?

Not necessarily. First of all, where you *do* find a human being still in charge of making decisions, you will find at worst someone mindlessly serving the Sacred Bottom Line, and at best someone with a fancy title who is himself struggling with the mechanism.

Because, second of all, *people* are not exactly in charge of publishing any more. The mechanism itself is in charge. Have we been secretly conquered by an alien life-form? In a way we have, though this golem is strictly of our own creation. It's called the corporate decision-making process.

Now in a general way, the corporate decision-making process isn't such a bad idea. Instead of President Napoleon deciding everything out of his hip pocket, decisions are made by committees which not even the Chief Officer can override by an act of will. This makes policy consistent and predictable. It allows sophisticated market research to input on production plans. It prevents unsellable goods from being turned out on someone's whim. It minimizes fuck-ups.

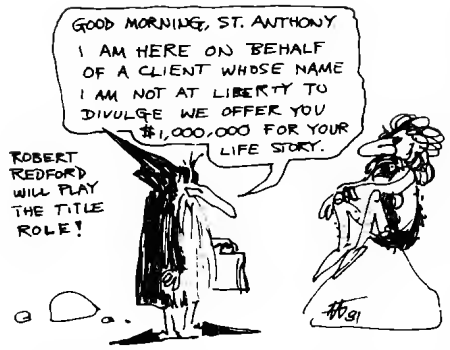
This is all very well when you're mass-producing cars or television sets or widgets. These are ethically neutral technological artifacts.

But when you're producing *cultural* artifacts that interact with the psyche of the consumer, the corporate decision-making process turns into Frankenstein's monster.

Because it is, after all, a dead mechanism, a literal golem. It has no moral sense. It lacks a will. It just follows the program. It *is* the program.

The corporate decision-making process is programmed to maximize profit and minimize loss, which is a reasonable prime directive on which to base a business. The modern corporate program has a huge data-feed from marketing research. It also has access to all the marketing experts it needs. It has precise demographic information on its targeted consumers and sophisticated means with which to zap them. Therefore, dutifully programmed creature that it is, it follows the prime directive with utter zeal, and uses all means at its disposal to maximize the bottom line.

The horrible thing about the corporate genrefication of American publishing is that no human villains are responsible. The mechanism is responsible because the mechanism is in charge. But mechanism has no sense of morality or esthetics. Right on the interface between commerce and art, between utter bottomline commercial logic and the things of the spirit, we find not human beings wrestling with the inherent ambiguities but an inappropriate decision-making mechanism running out of control.



This is exactly how it is possible for a sophisticated technological society to develop huge cultural blindspots in areas of central cultural concern. The more sophisticated and complex a culture gets, the more things tend to get turned over to homeostatic decision-making mechanisms. Mechanisms which are programmed to follow some simple prime directive, but which are not programmed to judge its appropriateness. All it takes is for one of these mechanisms to be really badly placed, and almost anything can happen against all human reason.

Which begins to explain how it was possible for the sphere of discourse of science fiction to be consigned to purdah through a half-century of rapid evolutionary change during which it should have been a central cultural concern.

When Gernsback genrefied "scientifiction" as a sub-genre of pulp adventure fiction, a fundamental misperception was perpetrated which has dogged American science fiction ever since. While a genre format can be overlayed on science fiction to produce a commercial genre like westerns or romances or gothics, science fiction cannot be *defined* by a format. Westerns and historical genres are defined by their settings. Detective fiction is defined by its plot. Modern romances are defined by their archetypal character relationships.

But science fiction cannot be defined along any of these parameters. It isn't a place, it isn't a time, it isn't a plot, it isn't its characters. It is inherently different from everything else that has become genrefied. It confuses the mechanism. It does not compute.

Science fiction never really fitted its genre parameters because no genre parameters could define it. It never really belonged as a sub-genre of boys' pulp adventure. Prior to Gernsback, science fiction existed like any other novel. Twain and Shelley and Wells and Verne. Certainly not enough people for a real SFWA party.

But since science fiction had entered the arena of commercial genre publishing it was genrefied all the same, if not *entirely* as a literature, certainly in a marketing sense. When book publishers began doing science fiction, they took their packaging motifs from the pulp magazines. Not surprising then that science fiction looked like a pulp genre, literally perceived as such on the racks.

Now in a properly functioning literate society, there would be a critical community capable of insight into such a malfunction and having the cultural clout to get it repaired.

But there has been an even worse malfunction in the overall critical community itself, far-ranging, multiplex and not born yesterday.

Until the development of mass printing, about the early 19th Century say, there was obviously no such thing as "popular literature". By modern standards, very few books were published, and in small printings, and reading was entirely an elite taste.

Then, of course, publishing became a mass market business, magazines were invented, literacy became general, and all sorts of genre formulas were concocted to appeal to the "low brows". The "high brow" literary culture, the writing and critical community in England first confronted with this cultural revolution, needed to develop some mechanism for separating the wheat from the chaff.

When books were relatively few and far between, each one could be an event in the little world of letters, but when mass publishing came in, it became necessary to apply categorical exclusions from the sphere of critical attention, or be swamped by the slush-pile. Thus the pragmatic ancestors of Leavis' ossified Great Tradition and the present-day mandarinate of letters.

For of course, the moment "high brow literature" self-consciously split itself off from the genres of "low brow" commercial literature, it was on the way to genrefying *itself*.

Hasn't it already identified the targeted market and defined its parameters? Hadn't it already created a visible influence establishment to be the object of PR courtship?

For a long time now, of course, publishers have known where to advertise "high brow lit", how much to spend on it, how many books you can expect to sell and the politics of securing reviews in the right places.

When a group of writers and critics start talking about a "Great Tradition", it is not likely they are talking about the tradition of other than their own tribe. Like the Academie Francaise, they become a self-defined elite genre. Everything not included in the genre is excluded from the tribal sphere of discourse. Instead of a Rome to which all roads lead, it becomes a stone fortress beseiged by sub-literate barbarians. It becomes exclusionary. It seals itself off.

As soon as it does so, of course, it becomes fair game for the marketers. They know exactly how many copies this genre will sell -- and the numbers ain't too terrific -- how important it is in the balance sheet.

And so you have the present situation. "Higher Criticism" written by critics other critics would like to grow up to be is ascended to babble. It becomes more and more Talmudic. It becomes more and more about its own theories and less and less about any primary object of discourse, which is to say a work of fiction. It's published in obscure journals but nevertheless it's good enough to make its creators academic superstars.

Unfortunately, the fiction in this country that calls itself avant-garde is published in tiny editions for little or no advances by small presses, and usually never sees a mass market edition. Which is to say it sells zilch. Which is not so surprising, seeing as it's targeted at a minuscule audience of mandarins.

Of course, by now "*mainstream* serious literature" is quite a separate genre from "*non-commercial* serious literature" and its demographics look a bit better. Here you have the power-base of the New York Literary Establishment, which is to say the commercial high-brow critics and their favored writers. You can sell books in this genre. The critics are still reviewing books. They're excerptable for good jacket quotes. There are publications well-targeted to the audience in which to buy ad space. PR access to the electronic media is relatively good. You can even break a best-seller out of this genre from time to time.

What is lacking in all this, of course, is any critical overview of the *literary* culture entire. Where a culture lacks a critical overview, uncritical and unselfconscious mechanisms will begin to control more and more decision-making processes. And of course, the more decision-

making is given over to unselfconscious processes, the less chance there is for a critical overview to develop.

Instead, blind spots develop. Science fiction is removed from the sphere of cultural discourse. Higher criticism loses contact with reality. Academe loses contact with creative artists. Publishers lose control of their distribution. Areas of occlusion spread. A generation gap opens up. "Science" and "feeling" become dichotomized. No one seems to know how to make the economic mechanism work. Popular culture visibly declines into episodic Muzak. Alienation increases. Crime increases. New religions spring up. Things fall apart, the Center cannot hold.

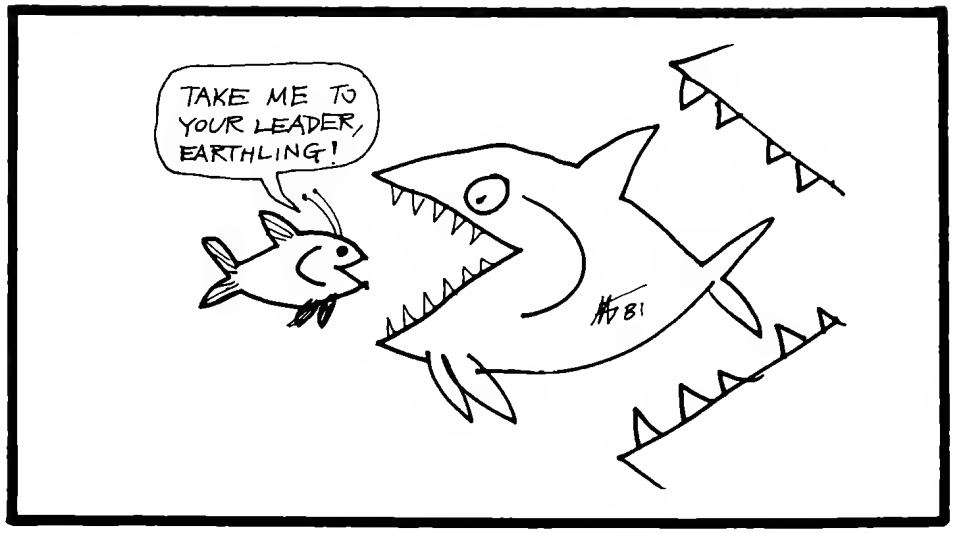
Because there is *nothing* at the Center. No critical overview. No viewpoint that transcends the mechanism. Only a steadily-increasing mindless entropy, as a civilization's destiny is taken out of the hand of the human spirit and given over to decision-making social mechanisms.

This of course, has happened to almost all civilizations thus far to emerge on the planet Earth. All pre-industrial civilizations achieved long-term stability by multiplying their homeostatic decision-making mechanisms to the point where even the inner life of the individual was ritualized by his role in a social mechanism programmed with theocratic absolutes.

The stability of perfect adaptation to an historical ecological niche.

But when the historical environment changes, ancient civilizations that have existed in sublime stability for centuries are overrun by industrial man. That's why they were pre-industrial civilizations, and that's what "post-industrial civilization", should we sink to that state, will be like.

Without overviews that look beyond the mechanism, without conscious awareness of culture creating itself, without a progressive evolutionary perspective, a civilization can hardly be expected to evolve progressively. The scientific method is such an overview, and what we sometimes call "western civilization" was not the only one to evolve it. But "western civilization" was the only one to use its knowledge of how things work to create an exponentially-evolving technology. Indeed, "western civilization", including as it does pieces of Africa, the Middle East, the Soviet Union and Japan ---and we generally understand what we mean when we say that -- consists precisely of those nations which have acquired sophisticated science and progressively evolving technology and truely integrated them into their cultures.



"Western civilization" is really "technological civilization", not a geographically-distributed culture but the current dominant stage of overall human evolution.

If we are lucky, it will prove to be an evolutionary step further towards planetary and transplanetary civilization adapted to mastery of the evolutionary processes themselves.

If we are really too far gone along our current vector as some would contend, we could go the way of Romans, Manchus, Aztecs and dinosaurs.

# # #

Just like a science fictional perspective to pursue an obsession with how things really work into a doomsday scenario!

But science fiction is or should be another overview beyond the social mechanism, another attempt to ruthlessly elucidate how things *really* work. And when it adopts the doomsday mode, the intent is to create a self-cancelling prophecy. Whether that prophecy be of totalitarian thought-control, nuclear destruction, a new dark age or the decline of intelligent and idealistically committed publishing. In a weird way, the doomsday scenarios are relentlessly progressive -- the people who write them are proceeding from the assumption that pitfalls in the road ahead can be avoided if we can envision them.

Indeed, one of the cultural functions science fiction should have been performing more centrally all along is that of generating self-cancelling prophecies, of keeping society alert to possible pits in the road up ahead.

But even more central a cultural vacuum is the progressive evolutionary overview that should be science fiction's higher cultural function: namely to evoke visionary possible futures towards which the spirit could aspire, visions at least theoretically capable of being realized.

After all, where else are we going to get visionary images of our evolving possible futures? If science fiction isn't performing this social function, then *fiction* isn't, period.

And what we are left with are the statistical bureaucratic least-surprise images of the futurologists, devoid of the art that connects prediction to the life of the spirit. Or images from the past served up by prophets and preachers and gurus, filled with concern for the things of the spirit, but devoid of a connection to the possibility of ongoing progressive evolution. Or the future strictly as hardware from the frontiers of technology.

Science fiction really is a unique perspective on the future, in the sense that nothing else can perform its higher function. It is, ideally, fictional art informed by the visionary scientific spirit, a poetry of imagery derived from the imagination but constrained by the best available knowledge of how things really work.

As such, of course, it isn't *a* perspective on *the* future, but a multiplicity of perspectives on a multiplicity of futures. Aside from anything else, it redefines the relationship of the individual psyche to the future by creating a concept of the future as something we create by our actions in the present, as something we have a say in choosing, as an ongoing upwardly consciously evolving process, as destiny rather than fate.

This is a perspective that is not addressed by fantasy or the "contemporary novel" or any other form of fiction except science fiction. Because this perspective is a functional definition of science fiction itself.

Of course science fiction itself is full of the opposite; dire warnings of inevitable human surrender to blind ritual, of robots or computers taking over, of the degeneration of civilization, of the ultimate descent to cultural hive-mind where autonomous human consciousness no longer exists.

What science fiction really is all about in the end is both sides of the coin, the struggle within our own nature, the dialectics of human destiny.

When these matters are discussed only within a minor genre literature they might as well not be considered at all as far as the society at large is concerned. The results we see all around us -- a society that seems unable to form a positive image of an achievable progressive evolutionary future, or at least not one in sync enough with the way things really work to be viable as a *possible* future. A society on the very threshold of an interplanetary age which cannot make a planetary economy work. A society which has lost its confidence in social and technological evolution, which is beginning to lose the distinction between science and magic, and which is beginning to consider reason itself as suspect.

But science fiction, ghettoized though it be, still exists, and with a strange grass-roots vitality. No one supports it with grants. Science fiction writers for the most part don't get to ride the literary lecture circuit or do the Johnny Carson show. National publications don't shower science fiction with publicity. The Literary Establishment ignores it. Yet there it is, with something like 15% of the fiction market.

Maybe people aren't as dumb as blind social mechanisms. Maybe they are not even as dumb as their demographic profiles. While the elite avant-garde became foundation mendicants and the "serious novel" became a commercially endangered species, science fiction survived as a literature supported entirely by the proceeds of sales to readers. If this has always been a two-edged sword, it has also always meant that a need for such a literature has always been felt by more than enough readers to support its existence.

Since I started writing the STAYIN' ALIVE column for LOCUS, of course, the publishing industry has gone well into the process of genrefying everything else the way it has always genrefied science fiction. At the same time, science fiction's market share was being pushed up by the grass roots. It became noticed. It became bigger business. It became enmeshed in the corporate decision-making process.

What will happen next? Well, for one thing, we're seeing the emergence of more than one sf genre. In other words, the total market has now become big enough to carve up into more finely-tuned demographic slices.

On one level, a genrefied market designed to key into adolescent power fantasies marketed towards the demographic perception of the STAR TREK and STAR WARS generations.

On another level, science fiction as usual for what is perceived as the core audience by the industry even today -- the science fiction subculture.

And on a third level, that feat of prestidigitation, the mainstream science fiction novel.

The what?

The mainstream science fiction novel. "Mainstream" now being defined entirely by the bottom line. Mainstream meaning an "A" book with A marketing and "genre" meaning a B book with B marketing. When *everything* becomes a genre, the only meaningful genre distinctions are the numbers. Just as I once defined science fiction as "anything published as science fiction", so do industry parameters now define "mainstream" as anything published as an A book.

RIDDLEY WALKER, for example, was mainstream in boards, but won't make it as an A book in paperback. CHILDREN OF DUNE became a best seller without real A book treatment, a grass-roots effect. But GOD EMPEROR OF DUNE, even with its pulp title and hardcore science fiction content, was no surprise best seller; it was marketed as an A book and became a mainstream best seller according to expectations.

What is beginning to happen is that the publishing industry, in its usual laggardly fashion, is beginning to learn from the grass roots. Even though science fiction had been confined to a genre ghetto, and not without detrimental effects on the quality and seriousness of the literature itself, its inherent sphere of discourse was becoming more and more central to the problems of society, and the general public consciousness was inevitably developing a hunger for something like science fiction in its intellectual center. Even if it did not know yet that something existed to feed it.

In other words, up until, say, *STAR WARS*, there were many people who would have had an itch scratched by science fiction who barely understood what it was, to whom it was somehow inaccessible.

What made science fiction inaccessible to the general reading public? Well, of course, the sleazoid packaging didn't exactly attract an intellectually upscale audience, since they were not part of the demographic slice at whom the stuff was commercially targeted. Which in turn did not have a positive effect on the ambition of the writing. Of course there was always a sophisticated audience of *some* size who recognized what was going on behind the packaging. And so, ambitious science fiction novels tended to be written for this perceived reader, someone who already knew the language and imagery.

This, in a way, encouraged some fine novels to be written, since they could in effect be written for people who knew as much as the writer. There is something to be said for the compaction achievable by use of a complex system of stylized imagery shared with the readership.

But of course, to those who don't speak the secret language, it's all about as accessible as the Mayan Codex.

The Space Program, *STAR TREK*, and then *STAR WARS* broke the secret code. When men were really going to the Moon with commentary by Walter Cronkeit, all the space imagery of science fiction stopped being proof of crackpottery and started looking like prophecy. *STAR TREK* in a way was a work of genius. For the first time, someone invented a science fiction genre format targeted at a mass audience. In its three years of lousy first-run ratings, an average of 20 million people saw each episode. Over the years, probably every man, woman and child in the United States has become familiar with the Starship Enterprise, its Vulcan First Officer and its somewhat paranoid crew. It has entered public folklore.

And it brought science fiction imagery with it.

It made all that space stuff accessible. And George Lucas cashed in big. You knew it from the moment he started the film with "Once upon a time in a galaxy far, far away ..." He wasn't wasting any time establishing science fiction imagery for a supposedly uninitiated mass audience; there you were right in the middle of it before the first shot.

The publishing industry, being not nearly as capital-intensive as film-making and therefore not as paranoidly attuned to the latest Nielsens has taken longer to realize that 'sf imagery is no longer inaccessible to a mass audience.

But you don't have to be a genius to finally realize that if a science fiction movie can be the biggest grosser of all time, there are more than enough demographics for a very large national best-seller which does not require tens of millions of customers.

The fabulous Carl Sagan deal puts the seal on the mainstream sf A-book bestseller. $2 million. $1 million in pre-sold foreign rights. A movie deal. All on an outline. Who can deny that this is the major leagues?

Now a lot of people grumble that Sagan could only make such a deal for an unwritten first novel because he was already a big-time celebrity with ready access to the creme de la creme of media PR.

And of course that's all true. But the point is, that there's nothing very unusual about it. This is the way block-buster best sellers come into being.

The point is that all this razzle-dazzle and moola is *not precluded* for a science fiction novel. A novel about first contact with intelligent aliens, yet.

So from here on in, we're going to have A science fiction novels and B science fiction novels. Just as every genre of the mainstream mosaic now has its A and B books.

Now in the nature of things, there's probably room for no more than half a dozen viable A mainstream science fiction novels a year. And by the nature of things, those who know how to do these deals or who have best-seller credits rather than genre credits are going to get the lion's share. At least until more science fiction writers receive a higher (and lower) education in how things really work in the marketplace. And even then, there still aren't that many chances to break the bank.

So, like most other fiction writers, science fiction writers are going to have to contend with genrefied publishing. It's a new game now. For one thing, the top end is cut off.

During the 1970s Science Fiction Boom, we saw some science fiction novels sell big within the genre. I think we're going to see less of that. As soon as publishers conceive of a science fiction novel as having mainstream demographics, they will pull it from the regular genre science fiction line with its genre packaging and package it as a mainstream science fiction novel to be marketed accordingly.

A genre logo on a science fiction novel will place a ceiling on its sales. A genre publishing program will ultimately lose the science fiction novels it would most like to publish, at least in terms of its bottom line. The books that should be leading its line will be published on other lists within the same house. A strong genre package becomes its own self-defined upper limit.

Paradoxically, though, there is the possibility of applying a variation of the overall strategy to survival at a high level *within* the genre. Because a mass audience for mainstream science fiction has come into being, it doesn't necessarily mean that the audience for genre sf has shrunk. Far from it.

The cross-breeding of science fiction and fantasy has evolved a powerful genre formula with deep psychological attraction for a larger audience than ever before, particularly among adolescents trying to develop positive self-images in a society in deep crisis. Once again George Lucas had it right. By marrying hardware to the mystical Force, he simulated the longed-for fusion of science and spirit, and in a manner which zeroed right in on the nation's frustrated adolescent power-fantasies.

But what he created was not art; by his own insistence, it was "entertainment". STAR WARS perfected and updated the old genre formula, fusing "science fiction" with "fantasy" to create the "sf" or "science fantasy" format. And the elements of the mythos were as ruthlessly arranged along marketing parameters as the Iron Dream that Hitler sold to Germany.

The adolescent ingenue in all of us who is the secret hero of history, who will finally stand revealed as the darling of destiny. Lots of literally faceless enemies to slay along the way, no more subject to our human sympathies than a Kraut or a Dink or a Slope. Wonderful battlescenes to

stir the sanguinary libido. A villain of perfect blackness. Loyal nigger robots. And finally, in the Force, the triumph of the will of the hero over mass-energy reality itself.

Whether the specific imagery you plug in is the spaceships and aliens of space opera, the barbarians and wizards of sword and sorcery, or the dragons and deities of high fantasy, the functional elements of the genre formula are the same, which is why they can now all be published under the "sf" logo.

This, of course, is not fiction about how things really work, it is fiction about how our power-fantasies work, or more unpleasantly, fiction designed to masturbate same.

And while it is getting us off on guiltless Disneyland violence and making us feel like godlike heroes, it is telling us that our own will can conquer the laws of science.

In the science fantasy version, this ultimate egotrip is cunningly concealed in the seamless blending of scientific and technological image-systems with Jungian and Freudian logic. Here magic and science are portrayed as exactly the same thing, which means that things work however the genre imperatives want them to work to fulfill the archetypal power fantasy.

This fits into certain hungers in a rather large audience like a key in a keyhole guarding a money-bin. The rejection of what so many see as the spiritual sterility of the universe as we scientifically perceive it. The spreading adolescent alienation from troubled personal reality which is scorned as mundane and into a more colorful universe of role-playing games, electronic games, computer games and mind-cult games. The struggle of the superior being we all know ourselves to be to make its rightful place of glory at the top of the world.

And of course, an Osterized blend of science and magic, mirroring the blurring in the macroculture, as epitomized, for example, in the successful formula of OMNI, where space activism is advocated cheek-by-jowl with UFOlogy, and the "spiritual sciences" are handled continuously with biochemistry and medicine.

What can I say? In ruthless, bottom line, amoral terms, there is no better way to design "sf" to sell. This, ultimately, is what genrefication means -- to science fiction and to any other literary mode. You find the buttons, and you push them in the proper sequence and the targeted reader gets off, and you maximize profit, and the story that gets told has no moral that bears examining. Like a good professional, not a debutante, you don't give the trick what you think he needs, but what you know he wants.

Given decent demographics (which the sf genre has), you can sell a large volume of product by saturating a genre with a lot of interchangeable genre-tailored books, as witness the stunning success of Harlequin romances.

Of course you do lose an option in the process. When your line is a brand name for literary Big Macs, you lose the ability to exploit the exceptional novel, the one that can make you as much money as a couple of months worth of business as usual. You've got to sell a lot of Chevies to add up to one Rolls Royce.

It seems to me that if B-book sf genre publishing is going to continue to exist and even thrive, each house is going to have to decide which way to go as a conscious decision. You can't have it both ways.

If you adopt rigid genre format packaging ala Timescape Books, you find, as David Hartwell did, that you can't keep potential mainstream sf novels like THE VAMPIRE TAPESTRY and TIMESCAPE in your line. You can not keep them because you can't package them as what they are, namely science fiction novels accessible to the larger audience for mainstream sf. Both TIMESCAPE and VAMPIRE TAPESTRY did better as middle-list mainstream paperbacks than they ever could have done as genre-packaged Timescape line-leaders.

On the other hand, you really *can't* package a high volume of formula product on a book-by-book basis, since what you are selling is the genre format itself on a consistent basis, not any one episode.

Will it prove impossible for any genre sf line to maintain what in golden oldies was euphemistically called a "balanced list"? Balanced, that is, between editorial idealism and the bottom line, between novels of high literary and/or high sales ambition, and the bread-and-butter need to churn out X number of books a month.

When we look at publishing in general, the answer seems to be no. No, books published in any genre format breaks through the package into A seller status. The more rigid and segregated the format and package, the more impossible this becomes.

But science fiction is somewhat unique. Its unpackaged imagery can proclaim its identity loud enough. These days there can hardly be a subliterate person in the United States who doesn't know what a starfield or a rocketship or a robot or a ringed planet means. You could package a line of books with covers consisting entirely of standard lettering over a full-color starfield and no one would mistake them for nurse novels.

You don't need a logo or a packaging style to identify a line of sf on the racks. You can use cartoon-drawing, movie-poster realism, astronomical photographs, NASA picture handouts, Daliesque surrealism, or any other visual style, and it does not matter because science fiction cover art identifies the product by imagery itself.

So you can hire one or two artists to do your regular B science fiction line in a consistent style, which is to say their consistent painting style, period. And then you can simply use different artists to package your A science fiction novels in mainstream sf style using the same imagery. As long as the A and B books are not tied together by consistent packaging, you can do both to maximum effect in the same line, and also regain the flexibility to do justice to the vanishing middle-list book, the monthly leader.

As to how this all affects what is written and the people who write it, there is nothing new in the existence of a dialectic between art and commerce, of the conflict and interplay of artistic and economic imperitives, of moral ambiguities along the interface.

Formats sell. They sell because they were designed to sell and nothing else, with all the cunning and all the morality of the television commercials that spawned their present dominance.

Bestsellers, A books, the mainstream mosaic of house leading books, have their own genre parameters by and large these days. For the most part, the A novels that best fulfill the A novel formats of their genres will be the biggest hits, because they will be perceived so by their publishers and pushed accordingly.

In the microcosm as in the macrocosm. The best sellers *within* the genre sf universe will also tend to be those novels which best fulfill *their* genre format.

This is a fact of life in *any* genrefied literature. And it is also a fact of life that what makes

big bucks for the corporation makes big bucks for the writer in the usual proportion.

Yet since by the very nature of genre publishing there are a large number of what are considered interchangeable books published every month, written for low advances and not promoted, less attention is paid by the corporate decision-making process to what is really inside their interchangeable covers. It's still highly possible to get non-format sf published. It's also still possible to publish your taste.

The question facing all writers of fiction in the 1980s will be how to interface with the new realities of genrefied corporate publishing. Strategic decisions will have to be made, but also esthetic and moral ones, and they won't be easy.

A science fiction writer, given talent, will have three options: to attempt the mainstream science fiction novel, to fulfill the genre format or to write what you want to write for its own sake and then do what you can on the market.

In reality, of course, we will all be doing mixtures of all three, in the name of survival, art or riches.

Publishers, and particularly editors will also face a similar decision every time they publish a list. In the best of all worlds according to writers, editors would always buy what is closest to their hearts and then cause the house to sell it like hotcakes. In the best of all worlds according to the corporate decision-making process, profit is maximized, period, and by the best available means.

In the real world, the way things really work is that neither the ideal world of the writer nor the cold equations of the balance sheet can exist in isolation from each other. Any more than the things of the spirit can exist in isolation from the universe of mass and energy. Without some attention to the balance sheet, we have the present commercially non-viable avant-garde, all but invisible, and not *all* of it is empty pretension. Without some idealistic intent, the ratings go down after the first year or two and the flop rate increases. At present the flop rate is over 50% in the publishing industry, a rate of failure which seems to be accepted as normal at a time when the industry is singing the blues.

If you address the dialectic of art and commerce from a science fictional viewpoint, the way things really work is that economic choices inevitably have artistic and social consequences, and esthetic and moral choices affect the bottom line. In a healthy society, this is an exquisitely balanced feedback relationship of satisfying ambiguity and complexity.

When the bottom line exercises overweaning domination, the corporate mechanism dominates art, and pressures it down towards the lowest-common-format denominators. First the literature devolves under negative evolutionary pressure, and then the flop rate soars (as in new TV formats), because the mechanism is not programmed to factor in abstracts like "quality". Which, however, sometimes does come home to roost on the balance sheet in its own sweet time nevertheless.

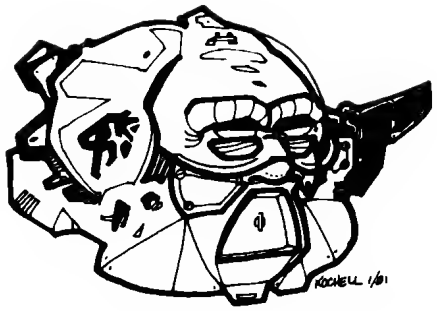
Should art absolute ever win a total victory over commerce to the point where a mode of fiction becomes entirely a dialogue among writers and critics in the absence of a demographically viable audience as reflected by sales, it's almost by definition out of business, as witness the plight of the "avant-garde".

When creative artists can maintain creative control of their own work and still make a living *within* something like economically viable parameters, when the artistic impulse and the overall bottom line can be balanced against each other by *people* rather than by homeostatic mechanisms, you can then at least have some kind of shotgun marriage of commerce and art in which both are forced to comprehend that there are times when both interests must be served.

This is a spirit that is fast disappearing from the world of fiction publishing. But it is a spirit which has not yet expired within what still remains a science fiction community. Ghetto survivors cannot help but have street smarts. And visionary dreamers can learn how to do business. And have been known to kick ass.

From a science fictional perspective, that's how things really work. The price of liberty is taking care of business, and the business of publishing needs human spirits at the helm. We still retain that, however uncertainly, in the sf realm. If we look unflinchingly at what's happening to writers in general, we may realize we still have a handhold on something precious worth preserving. Worth making certain economic compromises for.

But not at the expense of stayin' alive.



TEN YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION — SUMMER, 1972

BY ROBERT SABELLA

The neverending game of musical editors continued with Betty Ballantine leaving Ballantine Books to do freelance editing, Ellen Asher leaving New American Library and Frederik Pohl quitting Ace Books because of dissatisfaction with their payments to authors. New editors included Olga Vezeris at The Science Fiction Book Club, David Harris at Dell -- another in their long line of editors vowing to "revitalize the SF program" -- and Charles Platt at Avon.

The Hugo Awards for 1971 included TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO by Philip Jose Farmer as Best Novel, "The Queen of Air and Darkness" by Poul Anderson as Best Novella, "Inconstant Moon" by Larry Niven as Best Short Story and A CLOCKWORK ORANGE as Best Dramatic Presentation.

Important stories published included Joe Haldeman's "Hero" which would be nominated for a Hugo Award and eventually become part of THE FOREVER WAR. GALAXY serialized Robert Silverberg's DYING INSIDE and Ballantine Books published Frederik Pohl's THE GOLD AT THE STARBOW'S END which marked his return to freelance writing in a big way indeed.

AND THEN I SAW....

BY THE EDITOR

GHOST STORY (R) focussed on four old men who as youths killed a young woman mostly by accident and dumped her body in a local lake.

Lo, fifty years later they are overcome with terrors and guilts and "visitations" and die off one by one until at last the crime is uncovered and the corpse/ghost, at last at peace, is taken from the lake and liquifies/putrefies before our very eyes.

Given Melvyn Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Fred Astaire and John Houseman as the oldsters, the movie should have been better. It wasn't primarily because of the one-note roles and the simple story.

Worth seeing, though, on cable, or as part of a low-price double-triple feature at a theater.

CAT PEOPLE (R) asks too much of its audience: that in ancient times, by supernatural means, panthers mated with native women in Africa and produced children who could change from human to cat (usually against their will) and who can only mate with others of their kind.

And now, in modern New Orleans a brother (Malcolm McDowell) and a sister (Natasia Kinski) are forced by circumstances and their cat natures to mate---but against her will as she fights knowledge of her parentage and special powers.

Add a romance with the local zookeeper (John Heard) and some excellent mood photography, music and special effects showing/indicating the Change from human-to-cat, and you have a gripping film.

Natasia is nude often and long, and her proud, slim, muscle-lean body gives one the feeling that by God there is a big cat in there waiting to take over. She moves with catlike grace.

This is supernatural fantasy and difficult to swallow. But watchable.

WHOSE LIFE IS IT, ANYWAY? (R) is made credible by Richard Dreyfus' ability to convince you that he really is totally paralyzed from the neck down. From there his desire to be allowed to die in peace is very easy to believe; a successful sculptor and painter, a man in love with life and living, an auto wreck has made of him a mind without a body---and the torture is too much to bear.

Except to my mind he was bearing up very well with all those wisecracks, jokes and philosophical observations.

The problem with the movie (and probably the play) is that the lead's depression and despair and emotional agony are not starkly presented and driven home. The author/screenwriter/producers felt a need, I presume, to take the curse off the terrible existence of the man with wit and humor.

I believed Dreyfus was totally paralyzed, but not that that mind wanted to end. There wasn't enough bitterness and cruelty and pain.

RICHARD PRYOR LIVE ON SUNSET STRIP is a filmed comedy concert which is funny, but not nearly as funny as his first comedy concert film.

His constant use of four-letter words gets tiring. Most of it is gratuitous and used to trigger embarrassed laughter from his middle-class white audiences.

DIVINE MADNESS (R) is a Bette Middler concert---songs, fun, sketches, jokes. She's the new, more-talented Mae West. I'd like to see this again.

SWORD AND SORCERER (R) promises much with a fine crypt scene in the beginning, but the sorcery aspects of the film fade away and the movie becomes another cheap-jack ho-hum revenge-and-overthrow-the-evil-king plot with tedious and incredible forays into the king's castle.

There is a good special-effects display at the end as a man turns into a serpent creature.

The beginning and end of the film are good, evil sorcery; the long middle is dull swordplay, in spite of the hero's use of a "magic" sword which has three blades which he can launch at an attacker by pressing a button in the hilt.

EYE OF THE NEEDLE (R) is a World War II spy story set in England. Donald Southerland plays the clever, intelligent, ruthless German spy.

Excellent acting, direction, pacing, etc. A gripping story. Kate Nelligan [I'm not sure how some of these names are spelled] as the vulnerable wife of a crippled RAF flyer is superb. There are some graphic lovemaking scenes.

FIGHTING BACK (R) is almost stunningly honest in its racism and class hatreds, cultural clashes.

An Italian neighborhood is being run down and shot up by black

crime, dope, prostitution, vandals.

One Italian deli-owner organizes a citizen patrol and doesn't back off when violence escalates.

In the end after killing and beatings, the neighborhood park is cleaned up and cleaned out, the local kingpin pimp is blown away, and all's right with the world.

There is a token black among the Good Guys. Lip service is paid to the lip-service law-n-order dogma of the police. The real message is vigilantism-is-the-only-real-solution.

Tom Skerrit (of ALIEN) is the tough, don't-scare hero.

The movie has a kind of raw, honest realism and some hilarious ribald humor.

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (PG)

is set in the Depression thirties and is an odd mixture of song, dance and drama. Steve Martin plays a selfish, adulterous salesman who seduces a school teacher (Bernadette Peters) and abandons her to her fate. She turns to prostitution, meets him again...

It's a sordid, depressing story with no sympathetic character in it at all---except for the blind girl who is murdered.

Steve Martin dances and sings okay. Some fine production numbers and I suppose satire of the Musical format cliches, but the movie cheats by trying to play it straight while injecting itself with mockery now and then. Everyone was high on it except the audiences.

VICTOR/VICTORIA (R)

is a funny sex farce in which a starving, desperate singer (Julie Andrews) in Paris, in the thirties, is inveigled into posing as a gay young man who is pretending to be a woman.

Robert Preston, ever delicious, as a swishy queen, is her manager.

She becomes a hit of Paris and is soon making a great deal of money for herself and Preston, when she meets and is strongly attracted to a visiting mobster played perfectly by James Garner.

A comedy of errors, sexes, preconceptions and misconceptions. A fine supporting cast. Leslie Anne Warren is particularly great in every aspect as Garner's doxy.

MONTENEGRO (X)

shows Susan Anspach as a going-crazy houswife in Sweden who runs off to live for a few days among a low-class ensemble of gypsies who run a low-down bar and who put on sex/strip shows for their patrons.

There is startling humor, startling ribaldry, some nudity, honest talk---and murder.

The last scene will surprise you. It's a surprising, memorable film.

BLOOD WEDDING

is a filming of what might be described as an opera performed solely by dance---modern Flamenco dance with pantomime. The story is of adultery and a knife fight in the name of revenge and honor.

The dance troupe are shown getting ready for the performance, and then going through a complete dress rehearsal.

It's an extraordinary film and extraordinarily effective as drama. The dancer-actors and actresses are exceptionally talented and skilled.

EVIL UNDER THE SUN (PG)

is an elegant, well-structured and well-mounted Agatha Christie murder mystery, with Peter Ustinov playing her detective (a Frenchman--Belgian? --whose name I cannot remember or spell) with just the right touch of vanity and compassion and integrity.

Diana Rigg is fine as the bitch Broadway star who is murdered, Roddy McDowell is fine in his usual malicious/peevish style, and James Mason is almost invisible as a soured, desperate Broadway producer. Maggie Smith is fine as the resort owner in whose hotel (and island) the murder mystery takes place.

Well done. Well done.

DEATH TRAP (R)

is a quality murder story with some clever, surprising twists and turns. As a failing playwright, Michael Caine is murderously fine, and as his special friend and cohort (as well as look-out-for-#1-gaymate) Christopher Reeve is shown as a very good actor as well as a big, handsome hunk.

Poor Dyan Cannon, the wife/victim, is killed off too soon; she's always easy to watch and in this short role shows a great acting range.

I didn't like the ending: it's asking too much that the movie was a play all along, or that the psychic neighbor woman could be a fine playwright, too, given her broken English.

CONAN THE BARBARIAN (R)

was disappointing to me. I imagine Conan to be leaner, smarter, with humor and a cunning mind. In this film I got a Conan more beefy, dumb, inarticulate and brutish than I want.

I also got a plodding story of revenge again. I got a lot of endless traveling across barren lands. I got lots of gore, though, well done, and I got bizarre religion, exotic places, temples, sorcery, and James Earl Jones as a serpentine sorcerer/religious leader who had killed Conan's parents and sold the boy into slavery.

I got some heroic, colorful battle scenes.

But Arnold Schwarzenegger is, at least in this first Conan film, too stolid, too animalistic, too lousy an actor, too clumsy with English.

The director, John Milius, seems to have been equally clumsy in his decisions concerning scene structure and linkages. The movie doesn't flow---it staggers.

It is at once too serious and too ludicrous to take seriously.

INTERVIEW

ANNE McCAFFREY

The month of April 1926 saw two significant science fiction births. It was the month when Hugo Gernsback brought out the first issue of AMAZING STORIES, the very first magazine devoted to science fiction -- an event which marks the appearance of science fiction as a separate and distinct literary genre. It was also the month in which American author Anne McCaffrey was born.

As a girl, Anne McCaffrey gave up writing in favour of opera and the theatre. In the 1950s she tried writing again and had two stories printed in United States magazines. Her first novel, RESTOREE, was published in 1967, but it was her second book, DRAGONFLIGHT, published in 1968, which really put her name on the science fiction map. (Two of its constituent parts won awards: A Hugo for "Weyr Search" and a Nebula for "Dragonrider".) Other dragon novels set on the planet Pern followed at intervals. So far there have been DRAGONQUEST (1971, DRAGONSONG (1976), DRAGONSINGER (1977), THE WHITE DRAGON (1978) and DRAGONDRUMS (1979).

She has had several other science fiction books published, notably THE SHIP WHO SANG (1969) and TO RIDE PEGASUS (1973), as well as two anthologies and three romances. These days she lives in Ireland (in a house called Dragonhold) and spends most of her spare time raising and training horses.

On the third of April, 1982 she flew over to England for the day to sign copies of her new novel, THE CRYSTAL SINGER (Severn House, £6.95) at Birmingham's Andromeda Bookshop. After signing her name hundreds of times throughout the afternoon (while simultaneously chatting with some of her many fans) she graciously agreed to be interviewed.

Anne has silver-grey hair, and she was looking extremely elegant in a full-length coat of grey suede. She is a cheerful extrovert, very friendly and forthcoming on the subject of her life and work.

CONDUCTED BY CHRIS MORGAN

SFR: I'd like to start at the beginning by asking how you got into writing science fiction. Did you read it when you were young?

McCAFFREY: I read it, but it was not called science fiction then, you know. (Laughs.)

SFR: But some of it was ...

McCAFFREY: Some of it was and is now, but not so much in the thirties when I started reading A. Merritt. In fact, my mother gave me a copy of ARGOSY magazine with THE SHIP OF ISHTAR in it. Now, before that I had been brought up on Kipling -- the marvellous Indian stories. So I'd sort of been prepared for science fiction. And I discovered Edgar Rice Burroughs for myself. Tarzan and also the John Carter series, which I much preferred. To this day, when I reread Edgar Rice Burroughs, I think of oranges, because as a small girl I'd sit on my back porch with a plate of oranges all cut up into sections so that I could eat them while I was reading and go through what was available of the John Carter series.

What I did not realise was that Edgar Rice Burroughs was a war correspondent in the Pacific Ocean at the time I was eating oranges and reading his books. It was with a great sense of shock that I realised later that he had died somewhere in between that point and my recognition of science fiction.

SFR: Which authors have most influenced your own writing?

McCAFFREY: Kipling, Austin Tappan Wright ...

SFR: Ah, ISLANDIA.

McCAFFREY: Yes, ISLANDIA. (Laughs) I discovered it when I was fourteen. It opened a whole new world. I had been reading some other utopian novels -- I also read them for my major in college -- but they were just utopian, not science fiction. In the circles in which I moved as a young girl science fiction was not recognised, although my mother had, as I said, loved A. Merritt's stories. I read most of Merritt when I was in my early teens, as well as Edgar Rice Burroughs and Anthony Hope's RUPERT OF HENTZAU and THE PRISONER OF ZENDA. So I always tended towards that romantic end of fiction.

SFR: You mean you liked the romantic element and you also feel it influenced what you came to write?

McCAFFREY: It must have done.

SFR: Do you still find the time to read science fiction by other writers?

McCAFFREY: You have to, if you're writing it. (laughs)

SFR: Well, that's not what everybody else says. Some science fiction writers say no, they very rarely read a science fiction novel by anyone else.

McCAFFREY: I think you go through periods where you're searching for different things from science fiction. When I started reading science fiction, knowing it was science fiction, in 1950, I was hungry for science fiction. In the fifties, my god, I couldn't wait, you know? I was clamouring for it. Where's the next book? And there wasn't enough to satisfy my desire. That's when I started writing it. And then in the sixties science fiction was building. It was being carefully built, let us say, by the Milford Science Fiction Conferences which Damon Knight, Judy Merril and Kate Wilhelm took on. They wanted to improve the product,

and they succeeded beyond their modest ambitions of the time. I got in in the late fifties, early sixties. Damon Knight always said that science fiction went in twelve-year cycles, and perhaps he's right. STAR TREK gave it a tremendous impetus in the mid-to-late sixties and then the men landing on the Moon in '69 made another tremendous impact, and people began to think they could take their science fiction books out of the brown paper covers and out of the closets and start reading it in public. Since then it hasn't looked back.

SFR: Did you go to those early Milford conferences?

McCAFFREY: By golly, I did.

SFR: Did you find them useful? Did you learn your craft of writing at them or were you already an established writer when you first went to them?

McCAFFREY: No, I wasn't established when I first went to one. I was very pregnant with my daughter, Georgeanne. Judy Merril invited me up to Milford. And I went up, great with child, and met, to my eternal delight, Rosel George Brown and Kate Wilhelm. We were all, shall we say, freshmen at the same time. And you learn by observing, I think, as much as by hearing your stories criticised. I am not a critical writer. I'm not too good in a conference situation myself, because I'n not analytical enough. It was listening to what other people had to say that helped me, not so much the criticism of my story. Later I was asked to be chairperson of the English Milford conferences because I was a Hugo and Nebula winner and I was a well-known author. Jim Blish was physically not up to being chairperson, so I was asked to take over, which I did for four years. When I submitted a story which most of the conferrees liked, I decided that's it, I'll quit while I'm ahead. (Laughs) Otherwise, most of my stories were ripped into tiny shreds. I must say they were better for dissection, because out of them came such things as "To Ride Pegasus" and "Crystal Singer". And some of my other good ideas were expanded and assisted by the criticism I received at Milford conferences. It's a daunting experience, and I do not recommend it for just any young writer. It can be destroying to hear your own work criticised. You come out of the session in which your story is being alalysed into little shreds and you head for the nearest bottle of booze. After a while you do learn to be self-critical, but not self-destructive.

SFR: So do you know that your new story or new book is good?

McCAFFREY: I never do! (Shakes head emphatically; laughs.) Once I've got it down I think, oh, what have I said now? Oh, God, it's going to come out in print! Oh, agony, agony, agony! And then, you know, about two or three years later I reread something and I think, hey, that's not bad. Hey, what's coming next? Then I know I've done it right. But it takes that time not of gestation, but of aging, like wine, There are one or two stories I wish now I hadn't allowed in print, but writers get pressures put on them and it's very difficult to resist.

SFR: Have you attended any of these writers' meetings lately?

McCAFFREY: I haven't been to a Milford conference since, oh, 1975 or 1976. I'ts mainly been they've been at awkward times for me, and also the fact that I finally got a story that most of the Milford conference liked and I decided to quit then. (Laughs)

SFR: When you wrote "Weyr Search", the very first dragon story, did you have any plans for a series of books?

McCAFFREY: No, no! (Shrieks in protest.) I wrote a short story about dragons, period. You know? In fact, I almost didn't write it, because I had gotten the first 25 to 30 pages done, and then I wasn't sure when I reread it whether it was any good at all. So I took it up to Virginia Kidd, my agent, and asked her to read it. She said, "Oh, Anne, please finish it", so I went back to the typewriter after a lapse of about two months and finished what became "Weyr Search". Now, it was an inconvenient length at 28,000 words, and John W. Campbell, the editor of ANALOG asked me to edit out about 8,000 words because he felt it should be in one part rather than two. So I did edit it, but I put back in all that I had taken out when I put the novel together, so you're not missing anything. But I had only intended that one story.

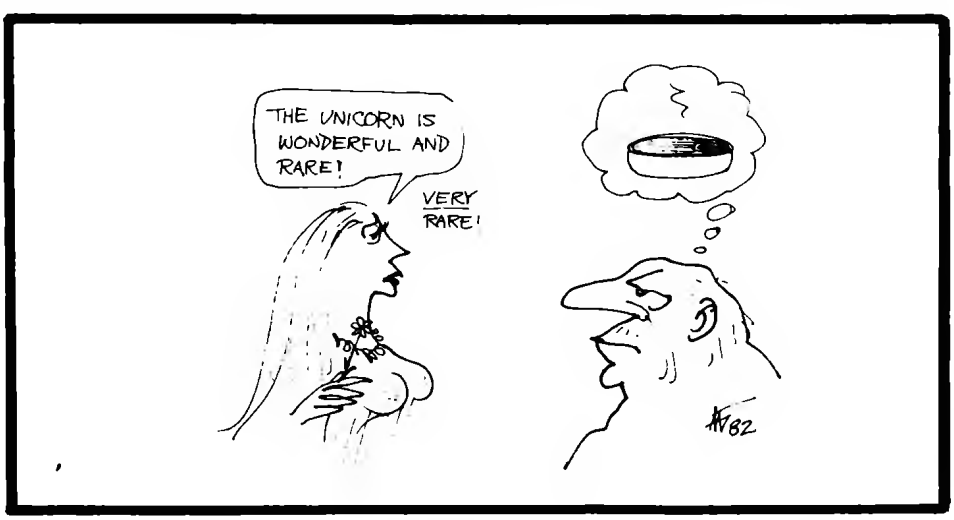
SFR: Then at what stage did you think again and continue the series?

McCAFFREY: Now, John Campbell -- you can't imagine this because you've got to see John Campbell with his cigarette in its holder, gesturing at you. You've got to get the voice, and you've got to see crew-cut John Campbell sitting opposite you, saying (assumes deep male voice), "Now, Anne, I think you've got some very fertile material here. I would like to see you develop this. You set up a situation and I want to see -- puff, puff -- those dragonriders fighting Thread."

So at top speed I wrote the story "Dragonflight", and he said, "Anne, you haven't told me anything I didn't know. This is a good bridging material, but it's not telling the story." Then I wrote "Black Dust" and he said (assumes Campbell voice again), "Yes, but you haven't shown me the riders actually contending with Thread, and you haven't solved their problem. There are only 192 dragons, in one weyr, and you say there were six weyrs. What happened to the other five?"

SFR: Were these things that you'd thought of?

McCAFFREY: No! (Shrieks; covers head with hands.) He was pointing out the weak links. So he made me write the part "Dragonrider", the two-parter in ANALOG, and pushed me on. I think I wrote the second 20,000 words in about a week, which is the biggest output I've ever done. With managing three kids and a husband at the same time it was a bit much. But I did it. He published that as "Dragonrider", then Betty Ballantine bought the four sections, including "Dragonflight", which John had rejected, and that became the



novel DRAGONFLIGHT. Then Betty and John wanted me to write further about the world of Pern and I did a first draft of DRAGONQUEST. I sent it to Virginia Kidd and she sent it back to me with two words: "Burn it". I did.

And about a year or two later I settled down to re-write DRAGONQUEST as it -- well, not as it is today, because I'd gotten about 370-odd pages done and I couldn't push it any further. Well, when that happens it's a signal to the writer that he's either boring himself and will bore his reader, or there's some plot flaw that he hasn't figured out. So New Year's Eve in 1969, Betty Ballantine invited me up to stay with her at Bearsville. I took the manuscript and we went through it page by page. And about half way through she looked at me and she said, "You know what the problem with this story is, Anne? You're trying to tell it from the viewpoint of F'lar and Lessa. It's not their story. It's F'nor and Brekke's". And suddenly all the problems just refocused. I knew she was right. I reworked the first couple of chapters. The rest was as it had been written.

SFR: Was this the way that the other dragon books developed -- you were asked by a publisher to write some more and you had to push things along in different directions? Or did you have an overall acheme at some point?

McCAFFREY: No! (Laughs.) I really wish I'd had an overall scheme. I wouldn't have made so many mistakes and inconsistencies that I now have to rationalise. But halfway through that discussion with Betty Ballantine she asked, "You can't just leave this marvelous idea of a white dragon. You've got to write a book called THE WHITE DRAGON." (Originally, that was Andre Norton's idea -- she said you've got to have a sport, so why not make it a white dragon?) Well, I said sure. At that point I was very broke, and I knew my marriage had failed, so I signed a contract for THE WHITE DRAGON, which I did not deliver for seven years! It was very kind of Ballantine. So the series was not planned as a trilogy.

Now, what happened after DRAGONQUEST was that I was scared out of my tiny mind about writing THE WHITE DRAGON. I'd done two books which were very successful. And things sort of hung there. Then in 1974 or 5 Beth Blish, who is Jim Blish and Virginia Kidd's daughter, was talking to Jean Carle at the US Publishers, Atheneum. She said, "I wish that Anne McCaffrey would do a juvenile female protagonist in a book, aimed at the teenage market, because we have tremendous requests for this." So Beth organised the contract and queried whether I would be interested, and I was. The genesis of that was that Roger Elwood, the mad anthologist, had asked me to do another young protagonist in a book and I had tried to work with the Menolly theme for Roger. I couldn't push it very far, so I had written about the smallest dragonboy, and he published that. By the way, that is one of my most reprinted stories, "The Smallest Dragonboy". It's all over the world. It's been scaled down for poor readers and for second-language readers, so it's had a very good track record. At any rate, I went back to the original Menolly material, and suddenly it started to flow, and I wrote DRAGONSONG and delivered it. On the way back to Ireland, on the plane, I thought, you know, I've got Menolly where I want her, with the master harper. So what happens to her when she gets to the Harper Hall? So I wrote a letter to Jean Carle saying, "Would you be interested in a contract?" and she was writing to me at the same time, "Anne, would you possibly consider writing a sequel to DRAGONSONG?" (Laughs.) So, anyway, that's the genesis of DRAGONSONG/SINGER. Then I had a chance to buy a house and I did not have enough money for the down payment, so I wrote Jean Carle and said, "Can I write a third book for you?" And she said, "Yes". Meanwhile, the pump has been primed for THE WHITE DRAGON and I'm feeling more comfortable about it. And so I wrote THE WHITE DRAGON.

I wrote "A Time When" for Boskone in 1975, and I incorporated that material in THE WHITE DRAGON, and then wrote DRAGONDRUMS.

SFR: Do you find that you enjoy writing novels for juveniles?

McCAFFREY: I'm not writing for juveniles. I'm writing less complicated novels with a fairly even plot line. I'm not talking down.

SFR: No, you're not talking down but wouldn't you agree that they're more suited to a juvenile audience?

McCAFFREY: Not according to my fan mail. You know they were written for Atheneum?

SFR: My point is that I was disappointed when I read DRAGONSONG because I was hoping it would be the same as DRAGONFLIGHT and DRAGONQUEST. I was expecting another hard, adult novel and I was disappointed.

McCAFFREY: (Chuckles.) Yeah. Well, they were definitely published as young adult books in the States.

SFR: But in Britain the publishers didn't make that distinction. Were you annoyed at that?

McCAFFREY: No, because if you're writing for the young adult line in England you have to scale it a lot lower, curiously enough. So Corgi themselves decided not to make the distinction, and I'm just as glad.

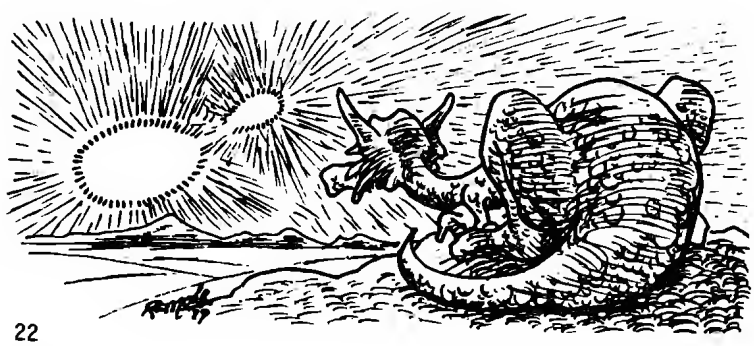
SFR: I notice that you're always very quick to point out that all your dragon books are science fiction rather than fantasy.

McCAFFREY: Well, they are.

SFR: How much scientific advice have you had on aspects of Pern -- on things like your dragons breathing fire and Thread falling?

McCAFFREY: Hal Clement helped me with the solar system. I have since heard from an astronomer in Australia who tells me the spectro-analysis of Rukbat, the sun that I picked, proves it could not generate planets. However, when I was writing John Campbell told me, "Oh, it doesn't matter. There's no way they can find out." At the time, in the 1960s, they did not have the sophisticated spectro-analysis, so it was perfectly within my rights to choose Rukbat out of the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC astronomy maps as my sun, so I did. It looked like a good name. And that the dragons could be genetically developed from the fire lizards is eminently plausible, but it cannot be stated at the time DRAGONFLIGHT starts. Besides, I didn't think of it then.

SFR: Also, the bio-engineering technology has been lost by inhabitants of Pern, so it's not even known how



the dragons came about by the people who are using them.

McCAFFREY: Oh, yes, completely lost. So, since I'm writing the story from the point of view of the people who are contemporary with it, I cannot do a lot of things that I want to. I went into the subterfuge of saying "Eureka! -- my mycorrhizoid spores" for Thread, but mycorrhizoid spores are perfectly legitimate in Arrhenius's theory of space traveling, which is what I used from the back of my head. Also I very definitely state that the dragons have two stomachs, in one of which they digest the phosphine-bearing rock. Well, phosphine gas, when it hits oxygen, ignites. Now, okay, that's not Larry Niven-type science, it's soft-core science fiction.

SFR: I understand the next dragon book is going to be called DRAGONLADY. Where does that fit in?

McCAFFREY: Well, because so many people told me where I ought to put my next book, I have not. (Laughs.) I went back in time to something I mentioned in both DRAGONFLIGHT and DRAGONSINGER -- the Ballad of Moreta's Ride. So I've gone back to the time of Moreta, which is, if my memory serves me, about 1200 years back from the 3700-AD-or-so setting of the rest of the Pern books.

SFR: Have you finished that novel?

McCAFFREY: No. I'm half-way through it.

SFR: Let's turn to your new novel, THE CRYSTAL SINGER. Briefly, can you explain the relationship between it and the four original Killashandra stories which appeared in Roger Elwood's CONTINUUM anthologies?

McCAFFREY: Someone once said to me that he thought Killashandra was a beautiful name for a heroine and I agreed with him. And that night, contrary to my habit, I got up out of bed and went to my typewriter and typed out the first two pages of "Killashandra -- Crystal Singer". At the same time Roger Elwood, the mad anthologist, was looking for material and this was a fairly explicit sex relationship which Virginia didn't think that Roger would stand for, but he did. And he wanted more. He wanted four parts for the CONTINUUM series. So I delivered the four different stories, the fourth of which got literally stomped on at a Milford conference. Certain ideas were suggested to me at that point by Jim Blish and John Brunner which I did not take up -- mainly because I don't have the scientific background. But since then I've found a gentleman in England, who works with aerospace, who has been kind enough to fill in what I needed to make it scientifically sound. Also, certain characters developed that I hadn't expected. For instance, Lanzecki, who developed into a much stronger character in Killashandra's life. THE CRYSTAL SINGER as it is at the moment, from Severn House, is the first two stories, or rather the first and third stories as they got printed, greatly expanded. I hope to do a second novel. There will not be a trilogy. I'm sick to death of trilogies. You can push material only so far before it begins to get very thin, and I can see two novels in the CRYSTAL SINGER idea but no more than that.

SFR: And you haven't written that second novel yet?

McCAFFREY: No, because I'm busy writing DRAGONLADY.

SFR: When I read the Killashandra stories I noticed a very strong Irish flavour in them -- the names, the characters and so on. Was this conscious at the time you were writing?

McCAFFREY: (Laughs.) It was, because I'm always looking around for character names and I've learned to keep long lists of typos and odd place names. At that point in time I was very deeply into Ireland and I was surrounded by all these marvelous alien names like Ballybran and Ballybrach and Shankill and Shanganagh and all the rest. They seemed easy to use. After all, people with certain ethnic backgrounds are going to name alien planets after things that are familiar to them, simply to give themselves a feeling of home. So the Irish background is there.

SFR: How did your science fiction anthology ALCHEMY AND ACADEME come about?

McCAFFREY: Well, that came about because Sonya Dorman and I were visiting each other at the time and she had written a story she wanted me to read. She said she didn't know whether it was sword-and-sorcery or fantasy. I said, "It isn't sword-and-sorcery or fantasy, it's alchemy and academe". And she said, "Hey, that would be a great title for an anthology." I said, "Good. Let's try and find someone who'll do it and I'll write a story for it too." Well, I never wrote a story for it, but I ended up compiling the stories that were in it. It was a good anthology in 1970 and it still is.

SFR: Because, of course, it was reprinted only a year or two back. Have you any plans to edit more story anthologies?

McCAFFREY: No. (Laughs.) I'm not very good as a compiler or an editor. I recognise my own limitations.

SFR: I know that a lot of people, including my wife, would very much like to get hold of a copy of COOKING OUT OF THIS WORLD, your very entertaining anthology of recipes suggested by science fiction authors. Are there any plans to reprint it?

McCAFFREY: Actually there are. Ballantine was going to reprint it with pictures of dragons here and there, and I thought that was a cheat, so that has since been dropped from the plans of Ballantine. Hank Stine of Starblaze has said he'd be interested in publishing an updated COOKING OUT OF THIS WORLD and if his bindings improve I'll do it.

SFR: How about your three non-science fiction novels? How did they come about?

McCAFFREY: I've always been interested in romantic fiction, as I said. In fact, RESTOREE, let's face it, is a space gothic, in which I take all the elements of a good, swashbuckling

space adventure except I have the heroine with all the answers rather than the hero, which I thought was a nice change. People realised I was having them on. Now, in the sixties, when the gothics were very popular, I was asked by Dell to do one and I signed and did one, MARK OF MERLIN, which I'd actually written the first four or five chapters of to satisfy the composition requirements of a course I was taking at Harvard. And I'd put it aside. Many years later I took it out again, shook it, blew the dust off, reworked it and it became MARK OF MERLIN. And then I signed a three-book contract with Dell, of which THE KILTERNAN LEGACY and RING OF FEAR were two. But then Dell ceased to correspond with me and I had no editorial feedback, and that was it. I've got five romantic novels sitting half finished and no market for them.

SFR: I'd have thought that publishers would want to publish you whatever the book was, including romances because of your name being well known.

McCAFFREY: The name helps, but there are fads in publishing, and at the moment the gothic isn't one of them, so I'll just wait.

SFR: Out of all your books --- novels, collections and anthologies -- what's your personal favourite?

McCAFFREY: THE SHIP WHO SANG.

SFR: Have you ever been tempted to go back to that and write another story?

McCAFFREY: No, because THE SHIP WHO SANG was sort of my escape valve for a lot of tensions that were in my life that decade, let's say. Those pressures have since been released or become non-existent. You can't somehow return to a scene like that as easily as you think you can, so I have avoided going back to the Helva setting. Helva is not a voice I feel I need to speak with at the moment, thank God, but who knows? Anyway, you can stretch a theme too far. It becomes too fragile and falls apart. So it's better to push yourself away from the table while you are still a bit hungry.

SFR: I mustn't make you late for your flight back to Ireland. Thanks very much, Anne McCaffrey, for agreeing to be interviewed.

THE CRYSTAL SINGER

By Anne McCaffrey
Severn House, £6.95, 302 pp.

REVIEWED BY CHRIS MORGAN

Undiluted wish fulfillment is an intelligent choice of plot for any author who intends to write a popular novel. This involves creating a likable protagonist, with whom most readers can identify and showing him/her rising from humble origins to great glory. It's the plot form which Robert Heinlein christened "The Little Tailor". It may not be particularly believable but it sells books.

It is this plot-form which Anne McCaffrey used in DRAGONSINGER, showing the underprivileged but talented Menolly rising to become the pride of the Harper Hall. In the same way, in THE CRYSTAL SINGER, Killashandra Ree begins by learning that she'll never be a top-rank solo singer, due to a slight voice defect, so she enters the dangerous and demanding profession of crystal singing, where she achieves almost unprecedented success extremely rapidly. There are considerable similarities between THE CRYSTAL SINGER and DRAGONSINGER. Both have female protagonists (though Killashandra is in her early twenties, some ten years older than Menolly) who are undergoing vocational training, so that the action of each novel is concerned with day-to-day events and almost all the characters are either members of a student peer group or instructors. In both cases the institutional bossman takes a particular interest in his prodigy; while Robinton's interest in Menolly is at most paternal, Lanzecki's interest in Killashandra is sexual as well as professional. Not least, the thread of music runs strongly through both books, as does the author's normal over-emotional style.

Where THE CRYSTAL SINGER differs from DRAGONSINGER is in its high-technology gadgetry and its alien planetary background. The profession of crystal singing exists only on the planet Ballybran. By a combination of technology, perfect pitch and enormous determination, crystal singers tune the naturally-occurring veins of living crystal to particular frequencies, then remove matched chunks with sonic cutters. These crystals, vital in communications and spaceship control systems, are of enormous value.

Four Killashandra stories appeared in Roger Elwood's CONTINUUM anthologies (1974-5). In that abbreviated form they were unimpressive. Now two of those stories have been expanded and buttressed with considerable skill to form THE CRYSTAL SINGER. In particular, the strange and complex symbiotic relationship between crystal singers and a microscopic alien life form endemic to Ballybran is well handled. The outcrops of crystal, often beset by deadly storms, achieve grandeur here and the addictive rapture of crystal-cutting becomes an impressively powerful force.

Of the characters, only Killashandra, Lanzecki and a couple of others are more than ciphers. There are some slow passages in the action, and the book would have been improved by cutting fifty pages. Also, it contains far too many typographical errors.

Even so, there's much to enjoy here. THE CRYSTAL SINGER is one of Anne McCaffrey's best books; certainly it will delight all her fans.

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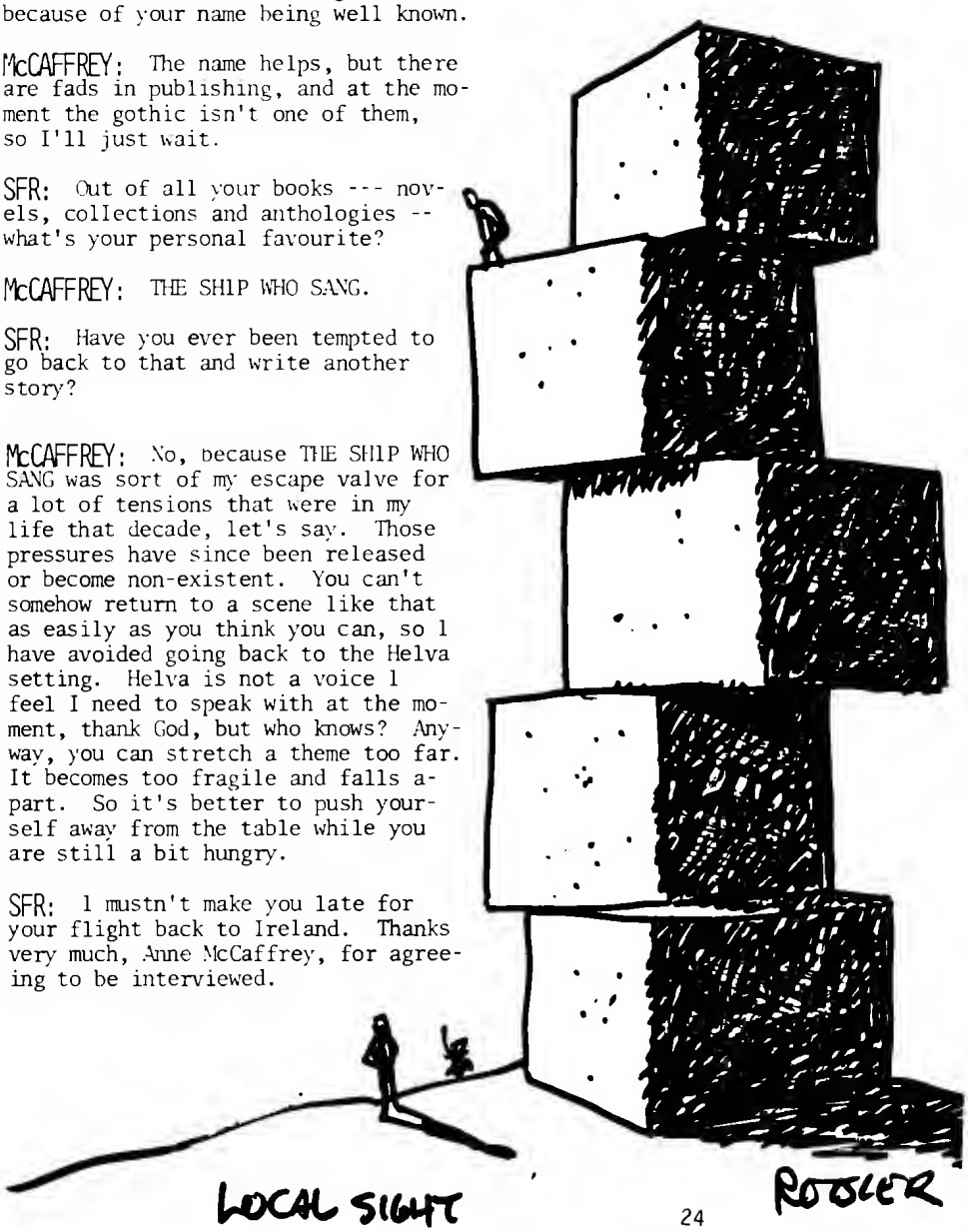
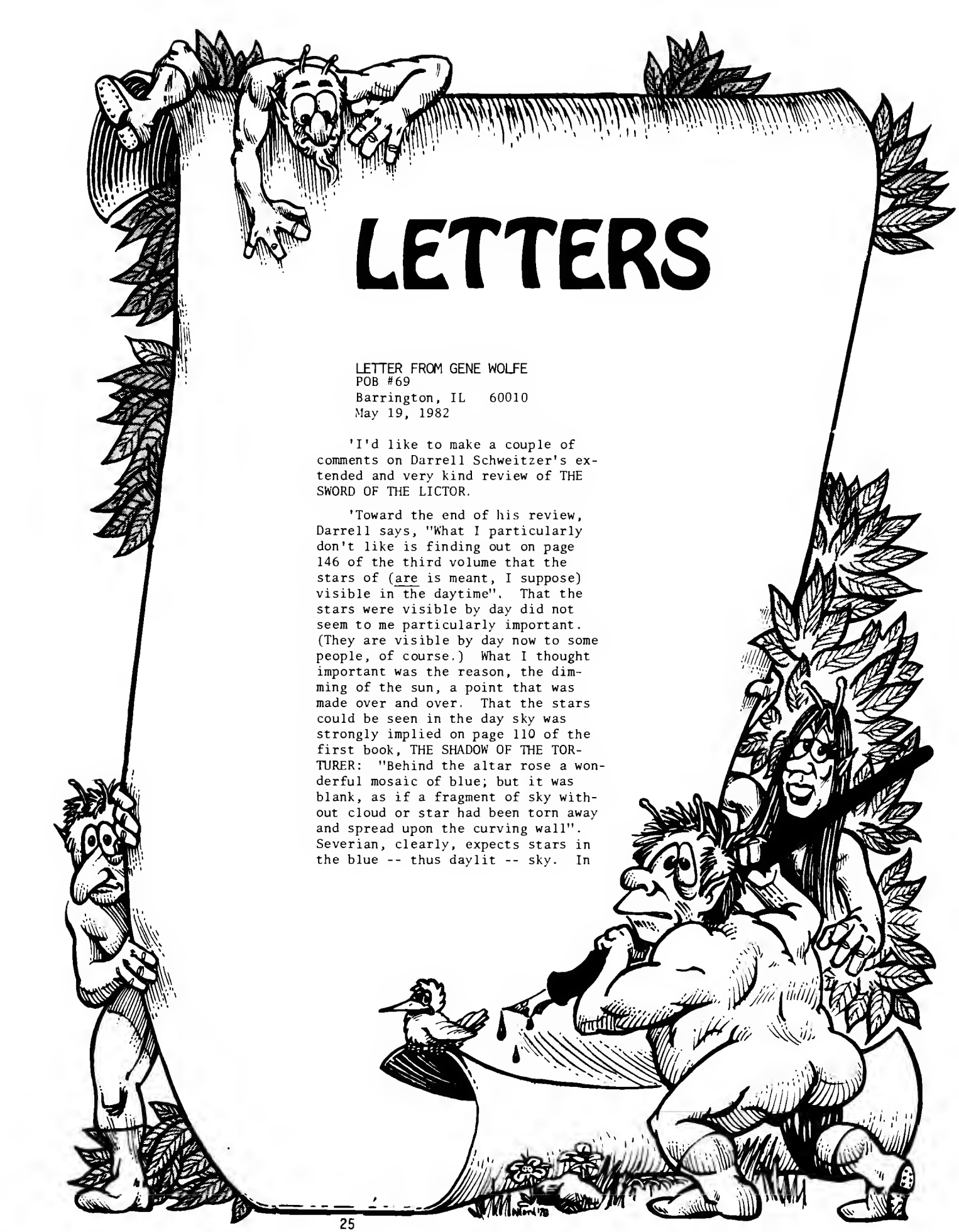




LETTERS

LETTER FROM GENE WOLFE
POB #69
Barrington, IL 60010
May 19, 1982

'I'd like to make a couple of comments on Darrell Schweitzer's extended and very kind review of THE SWORD OF THE LICTOR.

'Toward the end of his review, Darrell says, "What I particularly don't like is finding out on page 146 of the third volume that the stars of (are is meant, I suppose) visible in the daytime". That the stars were visible by day did not seem to me particularly important. (They are visible by day now to some people, of course.) What I thought important was the reason, the dimming of the sun, a point that was made over and over. That the stars could be seen in the day sky was strongly implied on page 110 of the first book, THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER: "Behind the altar rose a wonderful mosaic of blue; but it was blank, as if a fragment of sky without cloud or star had been torn away and spread upon the curving wall". Severian, clearly, expects stars in the blue -- thus daylit -- sky. In

the next paragraph: "...I was struck by how much lighter it was than the true sky, whose blue is nearly black even on the brightest day".

'On page 228 of the same book (I am using the hardcover) Agia tells Severian that a trumpet will sound when the top of the City Wall appears to touch "the edge of the solar disc". That is to say, toward evening, but while the sun is still well above the horizon. On page 233: "...the silver voice of a trumpet called to the renascent stars". Thus the stars are already visible and growing brighter. On page 235, after he, Dorcas, and Agia have walked from the Inn of Lost Loves to the Sanguinary Field, Severian mentions that the sun has not yet set. It's likely that there are other instances; I have not searched the whole book for them.

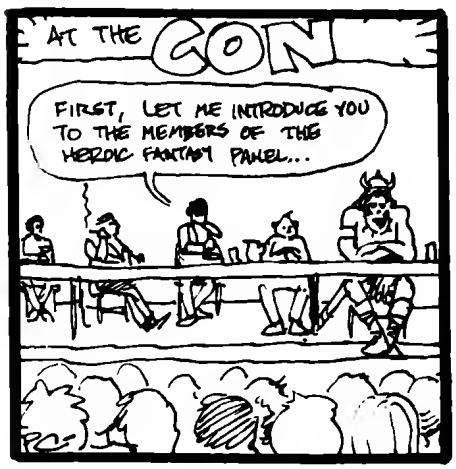
'In your footnote you speculate that I may be holding a crate of SHADOW hardcovers. I wish I were. I do have a few copies of the third book, THE SWORD OF THE LICTOR, which I have been selling at the cover price.

'Although I enjoyed Darrell's review and agreed with much of what he had to say, it seemed to me a review of the series to date rather than of SWORD. (Surely, a "Type A" reader might be forgiven for thinking that the play is in the third book; it is in the second.) Have you considered having another reviewer review SWORD?

'SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is a wonder. Torn between the desire to read it all at once and the knowledge that it is sweetest sampled slowly, I have done both, as usual.'

((Darrell periodically claims various books in advance for review, as he claimed yours. Since he has reviewed the saga so far, and has the courage and memory to go forward (plus the intellectual and academic training), unless he begs off he'll no doubt continue to do the reviews of The Book of the New Sun. And of course you can write and correct errors and misperceptions as you will.

((The wonder of SFR is that I manage to keep on publishing it on time all the time. A lot of people say the magazine is great and fine and excellent---yet I see areas I could upgrade and expand to make it even better, if I had the time and the will. The magazine has never satisfied me and has never been as good as it could be...and probably never will be.))



LETTER FROM JOHN BRUNNER

The Square House, Palmer Street
South Petherton, Somerset
England TA13 5DB
17th May 1982

'It's seldom that I read such unmitigated crap as was contained in the letter from George H. Smith in your Summer, 1982 issue, where he said inter alia: "Brunner is way off base with his fear of becoming involved in a war between the United States and USSR. All the missiles are aimed at the United States ..." (Emphasis mine.)

'What planet is this character living on? Clearly he doesn't inhabit the real world! Europe, including Britain, is littered with American forward bases. Does he honestly imagine that in the event of a Russo-American war the Soviets would refrain from attacking them? Does he imagine that civilians and non-combatants would be immune from the consequences? How can anybody, these days, be so totally ignorant of the actual situation?

'By the time cruise missiles have been deployed in Britain, we shall be in an infinitely more terrifying position even than we are now. It is known that the Russians believe Cruise to be a first-strike weapon, and also that while a defence against it is technically possible, they have admitted they simply can't afford it. Against a first-strike weapon only a first strike can be effective -- and that will mean blanketing Britain (and any other country foolish enough to allow the evil things on its territory) with a saturation bombing pattern to catch them on their way to their dispersal sites.

'Even prior to this horrible mistake, we are in a pretty pickle, here in Britain. I append a copy of a map from the NEW STATESMAN of 3rd October 1980, showing the plot of nuclear strikes against Britain devised for the purposes of a major civil defence exercise called "Operation Square Leg" held in September of that year. The shaded areas indicate the extent fallout was assumed to have reached approximately three hours after the attack.

'I don't imagine this copy would stand reproduction for SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW -- which is a pity, since if they saw it your readers might come to appreciate why a lot of people in Britain feel we are living in an occupied country -- but anybody who would like more detail could try sending a dollar and a couple of International Reply Coupons to CNO, 11 Goodwin St., London N4, and asking for a copy of their "Activities Planning Map" which is overprinted with the Operation Square Leg fallout zones.

'I hope a lot of people will pick up on this suggestion. They would find the map most informative. In particular, I'd like Mr. Smith to see a copy; it might help him to escape from his fantasy world and come back to where the rest of us live ... or die.

'Of course, this idea may well be abortive. I write at a moment when, thanks to the incompetence of the British government and the intransigence of the Argentine one, World War III may quite possibly already have begun.'

((Luckily, the war over the Falkand Islands was completed fairly quickly, the Argentines lost, their government has been reshuffled, and one hopes the Argentinians have learned that their government tells outrageous lies and is never to be trusted. But, then, every government tells its people outrageous lies (on occasion, sometimes at every occasion) and is in any event never to be trusted.

((It is my fond belief that international finance has reached the point in influence and control that Big Money can prevent a massive nuclear war between mere nations. I'd far rather have my nation and the entire world governed secretly by Bankers than politicians or generals. And realisitically, I don't see any alternatives to those choices---if a choice is involved for anyone who controls less that a hundred billion dollars in assets.))

LETTER FROM IAN COVELL

2 Copgrove Close, Berwick Hills
Middlesbrough, Cleveland
England TS3 7BP
May 30, 1982

'Orson Scott Card's article is funny, marvelously orchestrated,

makes a dreadful logical sense in direction and reasoning ... and makes me wonder which category OSC thought he belonged to when he was doing critiques. I'll take a wild guess and say the last paragraph showed his lonely stand, the parfait knicht in thin armour braving the mobs of critic-criticisers ... heroic, I call it, heroic.

'(Pace your review of GALAXY OF TERROR, Page 22, and coupling ... er adding it to other such films like INSEMINOID and ALIEN -- which wasn't "allowed" to show why the alien wanted human bodies, though it was okay to see it wiping them out -- it makes me wonder if modern schlock horror maniacs didn't happen to see an old Boob-Babe-Bem magazine cover and say, "Hey, what if that cat really wanted the woman ..." Thus do our excesses transmit even unto the second and third generations a curse ...).

'I like Schweitzer's pickaxe approach sometimes, though I don't think I've ever agreed with him when picking a really good book, but the thing I really dislike about him at the moment is his unending attempt to review a Lovecraft book in every column. This seems almost like nepotism, and in any case, grates. What's worse is that -- unlike REH whose undiscovered stories keep turning up, or being rearranged throughout the myriad collections -- DS just keeps reviewing works out for forty and fifty years and purely reprint books.

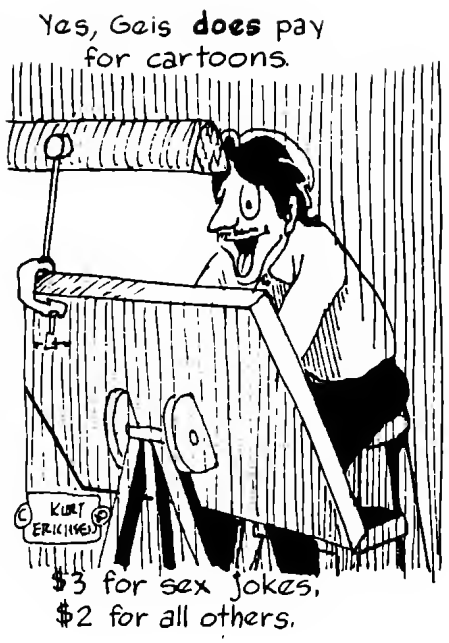
'The letter from "Piers Anthony" proved to me, once and for all, how intelligent the man is. He has the facility of expanding the meanest concept to book-length. How he does it, after reading him for 12 years, I still don't know. It isn't precisely "formula writing", as he thinks, because his characters change -- though it's easy to detect echoes of relationships down his books -- and his setting vary too widely for easy pigeonholing. Indeed, Anthony can write from seemingly every moral stance I've ever met. From the light joy of the Xanth series (the 4th is a bummer, though) to the violence-pornography of NEQ THE SWORD (whose mutilated hero I think I once read about in one of those 50s "men's magazines"; something like "Crazed Red Dwarf and the Crucified Lovelies"). I've always found him easy to read -- and ... the point is, I suppose, that Anthony is worried his output is suffering, and he's wrong.

'If Bob Barger, page 39, is right about CHANGING LAND being used as a prequel to the W.H. Hodgson book, then I can only cry "foul" and "pig" and "swine" and "oh, cruel fate" because if there is one thing I can't stand, it's an author who writes a book-length joke then sits back sniggering when people talk about it as a true fantasy. Zelazny pisses me off sometimes. (Graffiti: "Life is like a pubic hair on a toilet seat; sometimes you get pissed off")

'Page 49 -- McGuire doesn't mention the (I think) central line in ISLAND CALLED MOREAU when Aldiss makes the point that being changed from animal to human may be a step down the ladder rather than up ... page 51, I can't work out whether McGuire's throwaway review (?) of the Norman book is an insult to the author or an insult to the (review) reader -- if anyone can tell me what this book is about from this, I'll give them a book of their choice; a waste of 2 inches ... I wish Alma Jo Williams, Page 52, would tell me where she got a copy of THE EROTIC WORLD OF FAERY because I have been trying to locate a copy for three years and nobody has ever heard of it before now! And probably won't hear of it again. It seems in-depth studies of the underlying sexuality of fairytales -- which supposes the underlying sexuality of children -- are not welcomed either by the "public" or the literati. Myself, I've always found it interesting -- (like suddenly discovering that the original texts did not say Mary was a virgin, but a "young woman" and so destroying the basis of the Catholic faith in perpetual virginity; or reading THE HOLY BLOOD AND THE HOLY GRAIL and realising that the marriage at Cana was Jesus' own) -- that the fairy tales were carefully bowdlerized and it's difficult to reinstate them. The original Cinderella slipper was made of fur, which I submit conjures up more connotations than a stupid glass thing (which, bad translation or not, may really have been inserted to show clarity and purity) ... yet, even knowing this, the glass slipper stays in and the fur one is rejected.

'Page 57 -- two quick comments: My quarrel with FUZZY BONES which I found enervating, has to do with the "new" characters Tuning introduced -- like the mess later writers made of Doc Smith (*) and his morality; I never knew Piper to turn a girl into a whore for plot purposes and such a use of character seems to undermine the essential joy of the series.

'In FANE Alexander's dedication is to Jack Vance. Steve Lewis seems totally unaware that much of the book -- in setting, character, history and relationships -- is an homage to Vance. Since, unlike Zelazny, Alexander made a point of mentioning this, it's the reviewer who missed the whole point this time round ... and not the reader.



'*-- back to page 26: Schweitzer's Type A and Type B readers seem to miss me out. I read very fast (relatively), an average page per minute, but I do read everything on the page. I do however, read Doc Smith, and van Vogt, and similar and find them easy, enjoyable reading. Why? Because, horror of horrors, they write simply. Their concepts may be grandiose, the morality shifting or non-existent, the plotting wildly improbable and convoluted, but their prose is straightforward; in its simplicity they hang occasional insights and humour. Le Guin does it too. As for Schweitzer's "(not) being elitist", anyone who can interpolate "recognizes the absurdity" and not consider that elitist has slightly thick blinkers to his eyes. I grant my real objection to all this is that he supposes I dislike the NEW SUN series because of its sloth, its lack of incident. I don't. I dislike it because it's by Wolfe.)

'Lastly, let me say I don't particularly miss the card coloured covers. For me, SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW has always been the content rather than the package. I'd read it on newsprint, which I consider a compliment.

'(A dark last comment: Does anyone, with me, consider that Simak's production has gone up and sacrificed the depth of his earlier books because Simak wants to leave his heirs as many items of estate as possible?)

((I'm afraid Darrell is guilty this issue, too, of reviewing Lovecraft reprints. Well, it's his area of expertise, and he has carte blanche.

((Curious that the Puritan impulse---pretend sex doesn't exist ---has survived so long. In fact, I'm often surprised at how long the anti-life, anti-pleasure dogma that fuels Christianity has lasted so long. I suspect Christianity owes its entire continued existence on the existence of venereal disease; without the retribution of Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Herpes, the anti-pleasure dogmas would wither away. When science does manage to make venereal disease a thing of the past (proably by designing a virus to kill the appropriate disease virus), it will inadvertently also make Christianity a thing of the past. Speed the day!))

CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH
2111 Sunset Crest Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90046
May, 1982

'Orson Scott Card's "How to be a Science Fiction Critic" has amusing and seemingly valid categorizations -- but while they may indeed apply to critics, they don't embrace writers. Or not at least science fiction writers, who seem far more compatible and less contemptuous of one another.

'Last Saturday night, at a party given by Jerry Pournelle, I found myself seated between Theodore Sturgeon and Norman Spinrad, watching Steve Goldin and Kathleen Sky talking to A.E. van Vogt. Now, what critic would find all these diversified talents to his liking?

'Thanks for a delightful issue!'

LETTER FROM BOB SABELLA
13 Marshall Tr
Hopatcong, NJ 07843
16 May 1982

'Concerning the latest issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, I did not enjoy Orson Scott Card's "How to be a Critic" at all. If it was meant to be funny it fell considerably short of the mark; if it was serious then it was sad indeed. The author ended up appearing one of two ways: Either he has been burnt by critics in the past and felt the need for "striking back", or else he fell into one or more of his critics' categories himself and felt the need to confess in public.

'The fact that I try to be a critic myself has no bearing on my opinion in this matter, of course.

'Otherwise, the issue was up to its usual high standards. Congratulations on yet two more in the long line of Hugo nominations. Is it true that if you win just two more awards they will rename them after you?'

((Of course Orson knew he would be exposing himself to the arguments you put forward, when he wrote the piece and sent it to me. You have to give him credit for courage, if naught else.

((No, it isn't true that if I win two more Hugoes the award will be named after me. Who would ever want to win a Geiso? Or a Dickie? Or an Erwin? (middle name).))

LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER
113 Deepdale Road
Strafford, PA 19087
April 29, 1982

'The loss of the colored covers as an economy move doesn't upset me all that much. Far better this than you return to newsprint interiors. The heavy covers perhaps cut down on shelf wear, and make library copies last longer, but I keep mine in their original envelopes. The newsprint interiors guarantee loss of the text after a certain time. The lighter covers don't.

'To clarify matters for Millea Kenin, the apparent contradiction about the availability of publishable material, and small press magazines getting overstocked, isn't all that mysterious. If she published OWLFLIGHT on a monthly basis, I'm sure she would understand. Small press magazines get overstocked because they rarely publish more than one or two issues a year, and sometimes (as in the case of FANTASY TALES, for example) the total wordage of an issue is quite small. If she had to find 70,000 words of publishable fiction a month, or thirteen times a year, her opinions of the market would change greatly.

'As your readers may have guessed I'm editorially involved with AMAZING now, the same way I was with ISSAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. (The only other person on the Philadelphia end assisting George right now is John Ashmead. My only contact with the Lake Geneva operation is selling a story to THE DRAGON last year.) Right now we're seeing rather rarified stuff, most of it solicited, simply because the general run of would-be writers don't know about us yet. But things are beginning to fall into familiar patterns already.

'Allow me to let you and Millea in on a secret: It's a seller's market when major names are involved. Or, more precisely, it's a seller's market (for the short story editor) when dealing with any writer who can make a comfortable living writing novels. There is absolutely nothing an editor can do to make short story writing financially worthwhile to someone like Niven, Heinlein, Stephen King, Arthur Clarke, etc. Anybody who can get a six-figure advance or even a five-figure advance (or maybe high four-figure advances on a regular basis) doesn't need the money a short story can bring. He or she has to want to do the story.

'This means that the magazine editor has to rely on newcomers or at best, up-and-coming writers. Sure, you can get material from the big names. IASFM became Gene Wolfe's regular market. It published several stories by Brian Aldiss. It also published Niven. But these people didn't exactly fill the pages. If an editor has some financial clout, he might get two or three stories a year from someone like that. They might fill ten pages in the issues they appear in. Major writers have not been making short fiction a significant part of their output for many years now. Even one's discoveries get away after a while. Barry Longyear is mostly doing novels now. Somtow Sucharitkul continues to be an editor's delight, because after having broken into the book market in a big way, he still does a large amount of short fiction. (Most of it, admittedly, things to be cobbled into books later.)

'There are not "at least twice as many literately-written stories without glaring weaknesses received by any prozine as it has room to print". There are about half as many as it has room to print (in science fiction as opposed to fantasy). This is why you see stories with glaring weakness in professional publications. Since the boom in the novel market in the early '70s, you see them with increasing frequency. An editor with a good budget and some taste can only try to see to it that he gets the few really good things

that come on the market, and that his worst is a little less bad than everybody else's.

'The reason small press magazines can exist, paying 1¢ a word on publication, in the midst of virtual starvation at the 3-6¢ level, is that the small magazines publish types of fiction (mostly fantasy) which are not adequately represented among the newsstand magazines. I will agree with Millea that there is twice as much good fantasy available in short lengths as there is space to print it. Probably ten times as much. Far more of it is being written than science fiction. But if there were, say, ten professional fantasy magazines, all monthly or bi-monthly, with a wide variety of editorial tastes, the whole small press field would be wiped out.

'Linda Blanchard is wrong when she says that editors won't publish stories with unhappy endings. They will do so, but reluctantly. This means that the downbeat story has to be considerably better than the upbeat one. A trivial, downbeat story tends to be dull. A trivial upbeat story might be mildly amusing. I think readers and editors would rather be mildly amused than mildly depressed.

'If a tragic story is richly imagined and intensely moving (Rand B. Lee's "Full Fathom Five My Father Lies", for example) it will sell even if the author has never been published before.

'Orson Scott Card's article is an incredibly naked display of psychological defense mechanisms, which offers no insight into the nature of criticism, but makes perfect sense when you realize that the author is a relatively new writer whose career got off to a financially impressive start, but who has been widely perceived thereafter as not being very good. (I feel rather neutral in this, because I have never reviewed a Card book, or read one of his novels. Admittedly, the short stories I have seen do not make me want to read one of his novels.) The gist of the article might be stated as: "If you think Orson Scott Card is a lousey writer, you're a provincial, narrow-minded asshole. Here's why." Really, the article is so much a cry of hurt that Card should be embarrassed to have published such a thing. But he seems to have no shame.

'I wonder if he really believes that "cardboard characters" is a kind of pigeon-hole like "sword and sorcery", "space opera", etc. Do publishers label their books "cardboard character novels"? Does Lin Carter edit an anthology of "cardboard characters" along the lines of FLASHING SWORDS?

'No, Card has been widely accused of having characters who do not come to life, whose emotions are not skillfully conveyed to the reader. His stories have been accused of being failures as far as human interest goes. So he wants us to believe that there's not really anything wrong with his writing. It's the critics pigeon-holing him. Either that or he just doesn't know what the words mean.

'On the matter of pulp fiction: It isn't dishonest of me to ignore the Shaver Mystery. Shaver's first appearance was with I REMEMBER LEMURIA in the March 1945 AMAZING. (There may have been some letters in late 1944; I'm not sure.) But I was talking about FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, 1941-43. Shaver was not yet a twinkle in the Grand Dero's eye then. But FANTASTIC ADVENTURES (and AMAZING) were already incredibly successful, as is evident from the amount of paper allotted to them. They published pulp science fiction in its purest state, with virtually all the "content" (as editors now use the term) filtered out, completely accessible to everybody, not at all disturbing or challenging. This sort of writing did very well until the pulp audience turned to TV. Is it any coincidence that western fiction magazines disappeared about the same time as the surge in TV Westerns at the end of the 50s?

'To Dean R. Lambe: Those women writers who felt that the Scithers IASFM wouldn't buy stories with strong heroines were probably 1) not aware of the contents of the magazine 2) rationalizing away the faults of their own stories. If they read the magazine they would find large numbers of female protagonists and women writers. I can think of one issue in which the majority of the contents were written by women. The rejected stories may indeed have had strong female characters. This was not why they were rejected.

'While I am reluctant to qualify anything as favorable as Mark Mansell's review of my WE ARE ALL LEGENDS, I think I should point out that the book is not a novel, but a collection. If you read it as a novel, looking for novel structure, you will conclude that the "fix-up" job was poorly done. These days, when so many novels are assembled out of short stories, a simple collection of stories featuring the same character and arranged in chronological order is a rare creature indeed. As someone pointed out, when you incorporate a short story into a novel, you have to change the meaning of every word in it, because the parts of a short story point inward, to the story's own self-contained structure, while a chapter of a novel points outward, to the overall structure of the book. With WE ARE LEGENDS, I didn't attempt any such change. Any of the stories should be able to stand alone. I guess I will have to coin a term for such a book. It's a non-fix-up.

'To Bob Barger: The thing about THE CHANGING LAND is that when a book fails as a story and doesn't engage the reader emotionally, all the literary references, echoes and allusions in the world won't save it. Yes, the book is of interest to Hodgson fans, to a point. But I once read part of an awful novel, DAGON, by Fred Chapell, which did not hold my interest, for all it had something to do with Lovecraft. I later sold it to a fanatical Lovecraft completist.

((I suspect Orson's piece in SFR #43 struck a nerve. How else to explain your "second hand" attack on him? There are many reviewers and critics who think him a good writer and one who can do very good characterization, indeed.))

LETTER FROM BOB BARGER

5204 Dayton Blvd, #6
Chattanooga, TN 37415
May 15, 1982

'One point Paul McGuire overlooked in his review of William Tuning's FUZZY BONES, is a point that worried me a great deal. H. Beam Piper and Robert E. Howard share a great deal of similarities, both in their lives and their work. Both died under similar circumstances at the height of their writing careers, and both (probably as a result of having a perhaps small but very loyal following at the time of their deaths and, later, of having their work largely unavailable) developed a considerable "cult" following in the years after their deaths.

'Robert E. Howard's work, of course, has been the subject of a great deal of commercialization in the past two decades -- very little of which has done anything to enhance the understanding, appreciation or even popularity of Howard's original work. It isn't unfair, I believe, to say that Howard's original work has been diluted. Watered down by an endless stream of unoriginal and hackwork pastiche and comic books to the point that someone unfamiliar with Howard's work and who would like to read Howard, is often hopelessly confused. There are many newcomers to the field, for example, who believe the character Conan was originally created by L. Sprague deCamp -- as witnessed, Brian Earl Brown tells me, by a radio quiz show in Detroit that, at least temporarily during the program, held that the answer to the question "Who created Conan?" was not "Robert E. Howard" but rather "L. Sprague deCamp".

'DeCamp, of course, can hardly be held responsible for this situation. In both the Gnome Press and Lancer Books eras of Howard fandom, it was he who did his best to get the Howard books in print, keep them in print and bring Howard's work to a larger readership. Unfortunately, doing this required him (for complicated legal reasons apparently) to write several Howard pastiches. These pastiches were pretty good too, not at all like most of those today ... in fact, not at all like deCamp's own recent Conan pastiches, which have been dreadful.

'But the point here is, the exploitation of Howard's work began very innocently with a series of excellent pastiches by a very good writer. Does the publication of Tuning's FUZZY BONES signal such an era of exploitation to come for the work of H. Beam Piper? The early Howard pastiches by deCamp can readily be rationalized away as needful, for legal reasons, in order to get Howard's original work back into print (diluted with deCamp pastiche, admittedly, but hell, nothing's perfect, and there come times when you just have to take what you can get). But most of Piper's work is already into print, and also I doubt the unique situation that necessitated deCamp having to write Howard pastiches in order to get the original Howard back into print could ever occur again in a couple hundred years ... The question in my mind is:

'Do we need H. Beam Piper pastiches?

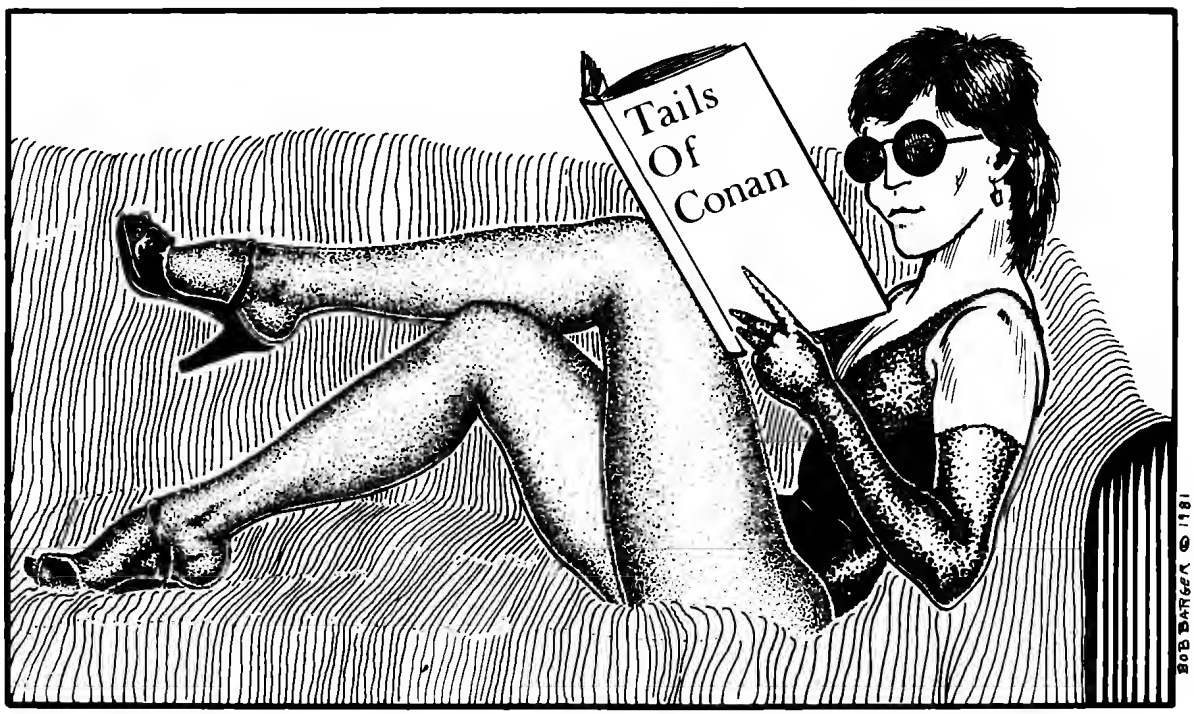
'William Tuning shows himself to be a good writer and a man very interested in and respectful of, Piper's original creations. FUZZY BONES was good for what it was. But is there any guarantee Tuning will write the next pastiche? Or the one after that?

'On the other hand, all the exploitation and commercialization of Howard's work, especially his character Conan, did serve to popularize the character (if not Howard's original work) to the point of bringing the material to the notice of movie makers -- with absolutely and unbelievably the end result being the recent release of CONAN THE BARBARIAN, a movie that despite all odds was loyal to Howard's original concepts on all levels. And yet, as a sad comment on the confusion and disorganization still apparently existing in regard to who actually owns the legal rights to Howard's original Conan stories, I read in a movie magazine that the movie's makers were unable to get the rights to adapt an original Howard story for the script. (Perhaps just as well, since the story they did whip up for themselves was superior, at least in a screenplay sense, to any single Conan story that Howard wrote.) Of course, while it would be well advised to take anything written in a movie magazine (with few exceptions) as merely a rumor, one can't help but wonder if perhaps the confusion and apparent disorganization in the area of Conan isn't simply a matter of too many fingers being in the same cookie jar.

'Fuck, maybe if Piper's work gets exploited and "popularized" to the extent Howard's has been, we might see a movie someday that is as loyal to Piper's work as the Conan movie was to Howard's. But the odds are astronomically against it, I fear.'

((As my review shows, I thought less of the movie, CONAN THE BARBARIAN than you.

((You never know who will be discovered/commercialized/exploited by movies next. We may yet see a DUNE movie.))



LETTER FROM DEBBIE CROSS & PAUL WRIGLEY

5429 SE Bush St.
Portland, OR 97206
June, 1982

'In December of 1980, a talented young science fiction writer passed away. In memory of Susan C. Petrey, the Portland Science Fiction Society has organized a fund to help other promising science fiction writers attend the Clarion Science Fiction Writers' Workshop. Susan herself selected to attend Clarion but was unable to do so because of lack of funds. Out-of-state tuition and expenses this year is over $1100.

'We are currently attempting to raise sufficient funds to enable us to award an annual scholarship from the interest. We are raising the money by auctioning donated items at conventions. Our biggest auction will be held at OryCon, in Portland, over the weekend of November 12-14. Some of the items we have to auction at present are:

'A letter from Damon Knight to John Varley rejecting "The Persistence of Vision".
A signed manuscript of TITAN.
Signed master galleys of WIZARD and the collection of short stories, THE PERSISTENCE OF VISION with corrections by the author.
Signed typewritten manuscript with hand corrections of "The First Day of May" by Kate Wilhelm.

'As we are still soliciting donations we intend to put out a catalogue of all the items for auction, in September. If any of the readers of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW are interested in receiving the catalogue, they should contact us at the above address. Non-attendees of OryCon will be able to make bids and the method of doing so will be explained in the catalogue.

Of course, if anyone should wish to donate items to the charity auction, we would be extremely pleased to receive them.'

LETTER FROM GEORGE WARREN

BOX EB
Pacific Grove, CA 93950
May 8, 1982

'I am going to get a rubber stamp saying "latest SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW superb" and let it go at that. Perhaps I will have postcards printed. Meanwhile, pass along my congrats as well to Elton Elliott; I still don't see how he stays on top of the publishing news so well; the only (minor) goof he made this last time was to believe Random about continuing Fawcett after the purchase. The truth is that normal non-cynical realism would assume that all purchases are being made in order to snatch up backlists, fold the firm and eliminate competition. (This is why Playboy Press -- hiss, the viper! -- is having trouble finding a buyer: Its backlist is weak and not worth paying very much money for. I sob slightly while I say this, having a neglected novel among that backlist myself.)

'In point of fact the whole publishing business is being run much the same way Charlie Finley used to run the A's: If the son-of-a-bitch is hitting .290, sell him to Dubuque; if the pitcher's ERA is under 3, trade him to Upper Senfgurken for two sorearms and cash.'

'The only outfit doing well currently in the New York publishing mess is Gallen, who is getting contracts when nobody can. Reason: While one stands to make not very much dough off Gallen's books (few of them sell over 100,000) there is no risk in them at all in most cases, since the tax shelter pigeons that Gallen, who is basically a very smart lawyer, represents are picking up the printing bill as writeoffs.

'I am surrounded by True Believers. If I express doubt in something the True Believer truly believes, he automatically puts me in a bag; I am obviously a True Believer in some other True Belief than his. I think that perhaps I do not Truly Believe much of anything. Not all the way. Jack Woodford used to tell a joke which I think to the point here: The guy comes into the telegraph office (Jack was a telegrapher once) and says, "I want to send a telegram to New York". The operator says, "Fine, here's the form; you get ten words for a buck". (This is a very old joke, as you can see.) The guy writes and writes and finally calls the operator over and says, "Here it is; please send it just the way it stands". The operator reads it out loud just in case: "BOOGITY BOOGITY BOOGITY BOOGITY BOOGITY BOOGITY BOOGITY BOOGITY STOP". The operator hands it back and says, "Fine, sir, but you only used nine words, and you paid for ten. Shall I add one more 'boogity'"? The guy reads it over carefully and then shakes his head. "No", he said. "That'd be silly". The moral of this story is that you don't have to buy the whole package.'

((It is said that in the land of the True Believer, the secret Non-Believer is king.))

LETTER FROM MATT HARGREAVES

17341 32nd Avenue, S. #D-118
Seattle, WA 98188
May 21, 1982

'Few things have really made me mad within the field of Science Fiction but something has just come to my attention and I would be interested if anyone else knows about it or knows why it exists.

'It seems that the Science Fiction Bookclub has two pricing structures in relation to the price that is quoted on each month's alternate selection. I received the July, 1982 flyer which had as the alternate selection, COILS, by Zelazny and Saberhagen for $3.98; however, a friend of mine who lives about four blocks away got the flyer with the price of $2.98. This is the second or third flyer he has gotten where the price was lower. Also there is a code number on the front of the flyer in the upper right hand corner, this number just also happens to be the price for the alternate selection.

'I don't know how long this lower rate has been used but I do not like it. I feel like I'm supporting the other guy's discount price. It is hardly a big matter but every minor ripoff by somebody adds up over time.

'Has anybody else noticed this difference for the prices? Either way I had to get it off my chest.'

((First I've heard of it. Glad you brought it to our attention. Anyone have an explanation?))

LETTER FROM CYN MASON
POB #5102
Seattle, WA 98105
May, 1982

'A private printer in Tacoma recently noticed one problem we new writers often have at conventions. We don't have much at all to sign at the autograph tables. (Like me, I've got a story coming out in Isaac ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE next month, but that's all I've got in print in the SF field, currently. At cons I end up signing the program book.) So this fellow came up with the idea of printing a hardbound, illustrated anthology specifically for and by Pacific NW writers. It'll be a limited edition, probably about 500 print run at most. And I've been blackmailed into editing it -- honest, I'm not masochistic, really I'm not.

'We're going to probably call it WET VISIONS. The theme, such that it is, is stories (no more than 10,000 words) about wet planets, watery environments, etc., or things to do when you can't go out.

'The money isn't so great. I'm paying 1½¢ a word (I'm really looking for reprints, at that price, but will certainly consider original stories if anyone is desperate enough to go for it.) and the author may have his choice of being paid in money or (and I personally do recommend this) being paid the equivalent amount in books at cost. That's what it cost us to produce the book, not the final selling price. That way we new kids can be sitting at the autograph tables with our very own stack of books to sell and sign. And make a profit.

'Loved Orson Scott Card's article on how to be a critic.'

LETTER FROM RONALD R. LAMBERT
2350 Virginia
Troy, MI 48084
May 11, 1982

'How come lately you've been so keen on shlock? If you want to write porn or pulp fiction, that's your business. But in issue #42 you suggested that everybody should write like they were writing for TV, and in issue #43 you say that for most readers quality writing is counterproductive and wasted, and you ask what is wrong with giving readers cheap thrills in the genre of their choice. Are you trying to corrupt the young, Socrates?

'There may be a place for shlock. It sells. But I regard shlock as a genre unto itself. Some people will read shlock, but they will also read quality SF, because like most people they like to read in more than one genre.

'Surely, a well-told story is preferable over a poorly-told one. All readers may not be consciously aware of the ingredients of quality writing, but no one is insensitive to the net result.

'After the money is spent, then what pleasure remains for you in what you have written, if you cannot take pride in it? The way to ensure that you will always be able to take pride in what you write is to write well.'

((Hey, I never mentioned schlock. I don't like deliberately bad writing. I do like writing that is excellent of its type, as effective fiction, which means holding the reader, gripping the reader.

((I've seen some romance novels which I cannot read because I hate gooey sweet-young-thing-in-love fiction, but which I recognize are excellently written as fiction. I imagine those authors are loved by their readers.

((Some of the 1960s sex novels were very well done erotica. Even today there is porno writing being done which is extremely effective in that it gives the porn reader what he/she wants in the forms and style that satisfies them the most.

((That's true of every genre, even the academic novel dripping with adultery and symbolism.

((Of course a well-told story is preferable over a poorly-told one, but that says nothing: who is it told for? Kids? Young wives? Teeners? Macho men? The same story can be told excellently twelve different ways for twelve different readerships!))

LETTER FROM AVEDON CAROL
4409 Woodfield Road
Kensington, MD 20895
3 April, 1982

'I was just noticing your exchange with Darrell Schweitzer in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #42 about the Gor books and pornography, in which you say, "The GOR books are not pornography! ... Call the GOR books porno in theme if you like; but they're not porno in execution or in current legal definition".

'Well, maybe not. There are certain distinctions between the GOR series and most porn (a distinction which can be found between other non-porn and up-front porn as well) -- the most refreshing thing about pornography, to me, is that it seldom stoops to a lot of phony psychology and sociology about how women like to be raped and abused and whatever. In Elvis Presley movies and John Wayne movies and Robert Heinlein books, it may be implied that the way to deal with a woman who isn't responding the way a man wants her to is to give her a spanking; and in GONE WITH THE WIND we may be told that if a woman isn't interested in a relationship with a man, he should rape her to get her interest; but pornography, mercifully, doesn't generally do that sort of shit. In S/M porn, consent before the fact is usually carefully spelled out in fact, and porn doesn't try to generalize about the rest of a woman's life, behavior and character from how she likes to fuck. Norman, on the other hand, does have this apalling tendency to pollute his erotic fantasy with a lot of silly theorizing about how all women like to be pushed around and humiliated both in and out of bed. This may be lots of fun for a detailed sexual fantasy, but it is lousy sociology, and Norman/Lang seems to believe that women really do enjoy being treated the way the Slavegirls of GOR get treated.

'The conventional legal and Moron Majority-style objection to pornography is that sex is really dirty and material which is designed to

sexually stimulate the reader is therefore by definition dirty. Therefore, a book which clearly intends to arouse the reader, and which seems to have little other purpose ("redeeming social value" -- the assumption being that to stimulate sexually cannot possibly be of value) is porn. Using that approach, I think it is fair to call GOR pornography, even if it does step outside of some of the conventional boundaries of porn. Not all pornography is very much more graphic than GOR (much of the Milan House-porn and the French bondage books -- all of which are straightforward, unpretentious, pornography -- is without depiction of graphic genital sex.)

'There are a lot of classic works of B&D literature in which people hardly ever even get their clothes off, and of course, the preponderance of lesbianism means very little (if any) penetration by the penis. A lot of S/M porn concentrates so heavy on hard-core teasing that sometimes you can get through an entire story without anyone ever having come into skin contact with another person. Many photo layouts never show the dominant at all. Taken in that context, GOR looks even more explicit than a great deal of hard-core porn does (take a look at BRUTE magazine some time.).

'Your analysis that women who read GOR books are women who have weak egos and who accept the belief in male supremacy -- well, I don't think so. I used to think there might be something to that popular notion myself, but after a while I began to notice that there seemed to be a lot of women around who had a very strong sense of self, were relatively demanding people, did not show any adherence to the myth of male supremacy -- and who, nevertheless, had lots of submissive/masochistic sexual fantasies. I think there's something else going on in S/M that most people haven't noticed and I think it has to do with the fact that people like to be pampered, understood, catered to and people like to feel that they are with a person who can be trusted and relied upon. The role of the Dominant in S/M sex is a largely nurturant one -- not a genuinely dominant role. The Dominant's "power" is illusory -- it is controlled entirely by what the "Submissive" really wants. And what the Submissive really does want is to be turned-on, to feel not just physical arousal, but a full-body psychological arousal that can't be measured by laboratory equipment.

'So why do women read GOR books? Well, you can buy them in bookstores in shopping malls. You don't have to go to "the block" where those sleazy little shops present an environment which is largely hostile toward women and where the society is composed largely of males (and of women who are there only to provide entertainment to males). Teenagers can walk into a bookstore and buy GOR books, too, while they may be afraid to go downtown to buy porn, only to be told that they are too young to purchase "adult" materials. Maybe if porn shops were more convenient and cordial to women, they would be buying straight porn -- but in the real world, the GOR books are just more easy to purchase (and cheaper too).

'You also say that pornography is largely a male power/sex fantasy media. That's funny -- now you sound like Women Against Pornography. The fact is, a large body of pornography depicts female dominance. S/M pornography shows a far greater proportion of female dominance, in fact. A substantial segment of the male audience for S/M porn prefers female

dominance, and many of them look at pictures of women who are tied up or being spanked and identify with the woman in the picture -- they are not thinking of that model as being their "slave"; they are imagining themselves in her place. More than half of the personal ads placed by men in S/M magazines are from submissives seeking dominants -- and many specifically ask for a "firm mistress" who will force them to wear women's clothing.

'I was so disturbed by the WAP slideshow of nasty pictures of women being really abused, which was accompanied by a speech which sounded startlingly similar to what you say (propaganda about how men get-off on the idea of brutalizing women), that I seriously spent a few years doing survey research and interviews of people about the subject. I knew there was something wrong; if all it is is that men want to dominate women, why do prostitutes have so many stories to tell about the men who pay large sums of money to be whipped? Why is there such a demand from men for professional dominants? Why do submissives complain that it's so hard to find a dominant? I may be the only person to have done such research -- the scholarly stuff I found was so scanty one could hardly come to any sort of conclusion at all about it. I did find that many so-called scholars and experts have assumed in their work that males are generally into sadism/dominance, and that females are into submission/masochism -- but I found no documentation that established that in any way. The only work I could find on the subject showed fairly consistently that the number of female submissives is no greater than the number of male submissives (if anything, there is a slightly greater percentage of male submissives), and that the number of male dominants is no greater than the number of female dominants (again, if anything, there are more female dominants). I interviewed members of the S/M community, and I was told that there were lots and lots of submissives around, but far fewer dominants, and that the smallest numbers were for male dominants. I was also told that it is understood in the S/M community that "the bottom controls the scene" -- that is, that the submissive is the person who really has the first and last word on what will be done in S/M experiences, and the "top", or dominant, simply responds to that. It sure doesn't sound to me like a lot of guys are just trying to get their rocks off by pushing women around.

'Don't get me wrong -- I'm not saying that there isn't porn around which is oriented towards male dominance, and even to abuse of women by men. There is some woman-kill porn around, and I certainly find it frightening (and so do a lot of S/M dominants, both male and female). But the porn-shop owner I talked to said that there wasn't very much of a market for it, compared to the more common sort of S/M porn, and I think it's very telling that I found in my survey of the literature stories which portrayed female dominance over males which were written by male dominants (who happen to be SF authors with well-known pseudonyms, which is why I knew they were by dominants) -- that tells you something about market realities.'

((But I would assume that the "usual" porn---fucking, sucking, even some anal and lez activity---is the major retail item, and is, judging from porn films and magazines, made up of (in effect) the worship of large male sex organs by women who are required to let semen splatter on their faces and be otherwise and sequentially humiliated in like vein. "Proof of cum is mandatory."

ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

WORLDS

By Joe Haldeman
Pocket Books/Timescape, $2.50, paper

A hundred years from now, "the Worlds" are satellites with a total population of half a million and "the world" is Earth after a century of changes, few of them good, including a Second United States Revolution. Haldeman's flip and fascinating heroine, Marianne O'Hara, is from the largest of the Worlds, New New York, and is on Earth for a year of special education and is unintentionally caught up in the activities of a group of underground fanatics intent on fomenting the Third Revolution, virtually destroying Earth in the process. The bare bones of the plot don't sound that intriguing, but the incredibly detailed future world that Haldeman has created is itself fascinating, and the way it is shown to us through O'Hara's eyes is both spellbinding and funny. In WORLDS Haldeman seems to have combined most of the virtues and none of the faults of Arthur C. Clarke and Robert A. Heinlien and thrown in a touch of J.D. Salinger. It's the sort of book you may skip parts of in your rush to find out how it turns out, but then go back and read everything you skipped because the writing itself is so entertaining.

TIN WOODMAN

By David F. Bischoff & Dennis R. Bailey
Ace, Paperbk, $2.50

A few hundred years from now, Talents (mainly telepaths and empaths) are a minuscule and despised minority, and few even survive childhood. Most of the few who do survive are isolated, some in asylums, others in the interstellar exploration ships of the Space Service, where most malcontents and freethinkers, both Talent and normal, are safely "stored" and unable to cause trouble back on Earth. One particularly powerful telepath is sent to try to make contact with what appears to be a living, organic interstellar ship in orbit about a distant star.

Contact is made, though not quite the kind anyone, aside from the telepath, had in mind. Despite a somewhat preachy ending, there's a lot of good, old-fashioned space opera adventure and sense of wonder in TIN WOODMAN.

FORBIDDEN SANCTUARY

By Richard Bowker
Ballantine/Del Rey, $2.50

An interstellar ship -- a huge blue pyramid -- appears in New England one day. The quite human-appearing aliens apparently have no technology other than whatever it is that enables them to travel between the stars. Back on their home planet, there is an embryonic cult that bears a suspicious resemblance to early Christianity. Learning that a similar religion exists on Earth, one of the crew, a secret member of the cult, jumps ship and is spirited away and hidden by a Catholic priest. The efforts to get the deserter back eventually involve the whole world, including the Pope, and almost everyone proves to be a hypocrite to some extent. Despite an ending that is either inspirational or irritating (depending on how much of a Christian chauvinist you are), FORBIDDEN SANCTUARY is one of the grabbiest and most exciting books of recent months, with well-developed characters and the pace and style of a top-notch suspense thriller.

OUTWARD BOUND

By Juanita Coulson
Ballantine/Del Rey, $2.95, paper.

Whether a safe and practical faster-than-light drive can be developed before two thousand would-be interstellar colonists go into cryogenic suspended animation and start on a probably pointless seventy-year sub-light journey is the major question in OUTWARD BOUND, the second volume in the "Children of the Stars" series. Will -- or can -- the alien ambassador from the interstellar civilization which contacted Earth in the first volume help in the development? Or is he there only to hinder it, to keep humans on the reservation, so to speak? All in all, it's a fascinating story and the universe in which it takes place is developed in great detail. The only problems are the ones that are caused, I suspect, by forcing it into the "family saga" mold, i.e., it's about a hundred pages too long, and the major characters -- various members of the super-rich Saunder, McKelvey and Whitcomb clans -- are all too often irritatingly conventional.

EXPLORING THE EARTH AND THE COSMOS

By Isaac Asimov
Crown, $13.95

Carl Sagan may, by virtue of his TV appearances and a handful of best sellers, be the best known and best paid science explainer today, but when it comes to clarity, versatility and easy reading, he has to take a back seat to Isaac Asimov. Where Sagan often emotes and uses superlatives to communicate his enthusiasm for science, Asimov lets the facts speak for themselves, as they do very well in EXPLORING THE EARTH AND THE COSMOS.

The book is divided into four sections: space, time, matter and energy. In each, he takes you from the earliest discoveries and explorations to the very latest frontiers of knowledge and sometimes beyond. In the "Horizons of Space" section, for instance, he starts with prehistoric man's knowledge of the world around him, takes you through the early Viking explorations, the expeditions of Columbus, Magellan and all the others, continues with the rudimentary space exploration of the last few years, and ends with speculations about colonizing other stars.

It is not the simple recitation of facts, however, that makes the book so interesting, but the way Asimov can weave back and forth through dozens of fields of knowledge and put everything fascinatingly into perspective in a way that standard history or science texts rarely do.

For example, in explaining how Europeans became a world power through exploration and colonization, he also tells of 15th-century Chinese Emperor Yung-Lo, under whose leadership China became the most powerful nation on Earth, largely by virtue of its sea power, having successfully explored and raided as far away as the Red Sea and Egypt. However, under Yung-Lo's overly salf-satisfied successors, who thought intercourse with the rest of the world unimportant, China "drew back within itself in self-imposed isolation and left the rule of the sea to others", and, as a result, "lost the race to become the first world power", all of which has an intriguing parallel in the current United States tendency to pull back from the so-called "space race".

There are a few nits that could be picked, sush as Asimov's insistence on expressing everything in metric units and only in metric units, even the height and weight of humans, but those are only minor drawbacks in a totally fascinating book that takes you, literally, from before the discovery of fire to a quasar billions of light years away that shines with the light of a hundred trillion suns.

IT'S ALIVE! THE CLASSIC CINEMA SAGA OF FRANKENSTEIN

By Gregory William Mank
A.S. Barnes & Co., Paper, $12.95

This authoritative and well-illustrated trade paperback is the book for anyone interested in horror films in general or Frankenstein movies in particular. It covers in detail the eight Frankenstein films made by Universal, starting with Karloff's 1931 FRANKENSTEIN and ending with the 1948 comedy, ABBOT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN. It also briefly discusses almost every other Frankenstein movie ever made, both foreign and domestic. What makes the book so hard to put down, however, is not the movies per se but the accounts of how they were made and of the lives of the people who made them, which make up a good eighty percent of the text.

On the lighter side, for instance, you learn why the wolfman's appearances were so limited in 1945's HOUSE OF DRACULA. The yak hair needed for the werewolf makeup was running low because the studio hadn't been able to get a new shipment from Asia since before the war.

Or you are given one director's memorable scene-setting instructions to Evelyn Ankers, as quoted by co-star Ralph Bellamy:

> "Now, Evelyn, you're all alone in this dim, dark, dank, dingy, ancient, oozing, slimy castle at four in the morning. Your mother's been carried off by the monster, your father's been killed by the wolfman, the servants have fled, your lover is being chased across the moors by the dogs. I want to get the feeling from you, as you come down this stairway, that you're fed up with it all!"

As in many books about Hollywood, however, there are more tragedies than laughs, but they are all equally as interesting despite occasional heavy-handed writing. ("He was awarded the megaphone", for example, meaning "He was named director".) Among the personalities who, unlike Karloff himself and Elsa Lanchester, had less than happy endings are:

Colin Clive, the original Frankenstein, who died at 37.

Dwight Frye, Frankenstein's hunchbacked assistant, an excellent stage actor who died at 43 after a career that went steadily downhill the last ten years of his life because of typecasting.

Lon Chaney, who had a drinking problem at least partly because he hated his father, not only because of undeserved childhood beatings but because he always had to compete with his memory.

Bela Lugosi, who turned down the part of the monster in the first movie because it had no lines and because it didn't fit his romantic image of himself, and yet whose best performances were as Igor, a grotesque, broken-necked hunchback, in two later Frankenstein movies.

In short, IT'S ALIVE! is not only hugely informative, greatly enjoyable, and wistfully nostalgic, but can at times evoke as much sadness as does the fate of the monster himself.

THE COMING OF THE DEMONS

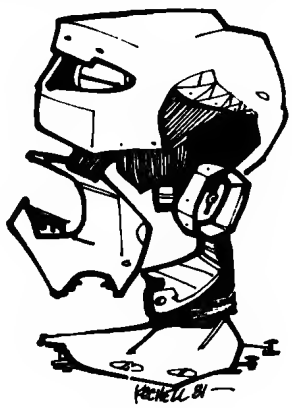
By Gwenyth Hood
Morrow, $13.50

The Pelezitereans, nomadic survivors of a planet long since destroyed, approach 13th Century Earth. Forbidden by their Prime Directive from interfering with the civilization of any inhabited planet, they send down only a small exploratory craft. Because of a pair of lowborn mutineers aboard the craft, however, the Pelezitereans soon become willingly and ever more deeply involved in European politics and religion, starting when the mutineers inadvertently save the life of the about-to-be-executed Conradin, 16-year-old grandson of Frederik II and pretender to the throne occupied by his would-be executioner, King Charles. Despite a generally slow pace and a few other shortcomings, mainly having to do with the very human and very medieval-seeming aliens and their "science", THE COMING OF THE DEMONS is engrossing from the very first page, particularly in its detailed and thoroughly convincing depiction of the cynicism and savagery practiced by virtually all powerful political and religious leaders of the time.

GOR SAGA

By Maureen Duffy
Viking, $13.95

Despite the title, GOR SAGA has nothing to do with the execrable Tarl Cabot or Counterearth, but is a refurbishing of the Frankenstein story set in a near-future England vaguely reminiscent of CLOCKWORK ORANGE. An irresponsible scientist (whose name, oddly enough, is Norman) uses his own sperm and the ovum of an ape to produce a test-tube hybrid which he raises as an "experiment". The hybrid -- Gordon, or Gor for short -- thinks he's just a dark, somewhat hairy human, as does everyone else except his father, the only person who knows the truth. The first two-thirds of the book, while Gor is growing up and being educated in various foster homes and schools, is slow and easily skimmable but the last third, starting when Gor's father turns violently and irrationally against him and Gor escapes into the "non-civilized" areas of England, holds your attention very well, particularly when Gor and his friends start searching for evidence of his real parents and eventually confront his father.



THE VIVISECTOR

BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

FANTASY AS A PUBLISHING GENRE, PART 1½

As has been pointed out at vast length elsewhere, fantasy threatens (or promises, depending on your point of view) to take over the science fiction market. This is an easily demonstrable phenomenon: fantasy books, usually parts of vast and sprawling trilogies, tend to sell better than science fiction. More and more are being published. Any book editor can tell you that far more fantasy novels are being written than science fiction novels. The ratios they give you may range from four-to-one to ten-to-one. I heard one admit publically that he hadn't seen a science fiction submission in a month. Everything was fantasy.

If we're to arrive at any understanding of this, first we have to recognize and ignore the reactionaries---you know, the kind of people who insist that fantasy is bad for you, makes you immoral from too much smiting and not enough honest killing, or makes you go blind and makes your palms hairy. These are usually not quite middle-aged writers who were Young Turks a decade-and-a-half ago. They've turned reactionary for the same reason ANALOG partisans did in 1967. They resent being pushed out of the limelight by a...ah, dare I say it? Hell yes...new wave of writers whose backgrounds, aspirations, and literary ideas are very different, if not downright alien.

The question before us is this: will science fiction as we know it be supplanted by imaginary-world, myth fantasy the way the lost race novel was supplanted by the interplanetary romance?

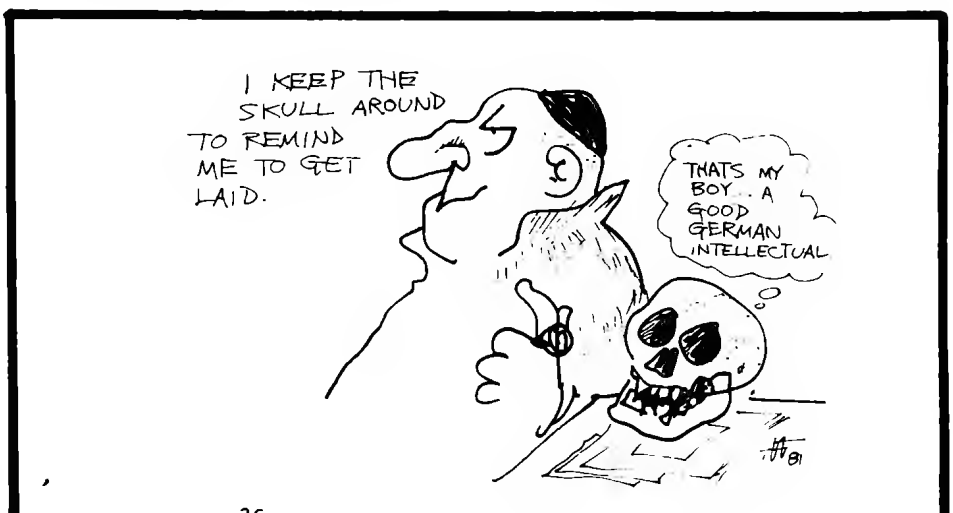
I think the answer is no. All a science fiction novel has to do to capture the same audience is to meet its needs. Myth fantasy has certain special strengths. It can do things science fiction can't. But I think the secret of its mass appeal is simply this: story-telling on a grand scale.

Audiences are tired of glib rehashes, of over-domesticated futures with no wonder left in them. And they certainly don't want books which strive to be "literary" in a static, non-narrative way. This is so obvious it's a big secret. Here we have the very essence of why THE LORD OF THE RINGS will always, always, always outsell J.G. Ballard's THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION, or the novels of D.G. Compton, or, for that matter, those of Mack Reynolds.

Where did the Sense of Wonder go? It went into fantasy, or, more accurately, it was rediscovered there. It is now seeping back into science fiction. We are beginning to see the influence of the Tolkien-type fantasy on science fiction. But there is no reason to assume that science fiction will lose its identity in the process. This is just another influence to be incorporated, the first clearly identifiable, genre-wide trend since the collapse of the New Wave.

I don't think anybody understood what was happening when DUNE became wildly successful, but over the past few years it's been abundantly obvious that the most successful science fiction novels are those that read like fantasy, such as THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN, THE SNOW QUEEN, etc. Without considering the specialized, usually metaphorical things you can do with myth, the "fantasy" characteristics of these books are roughly as follows:

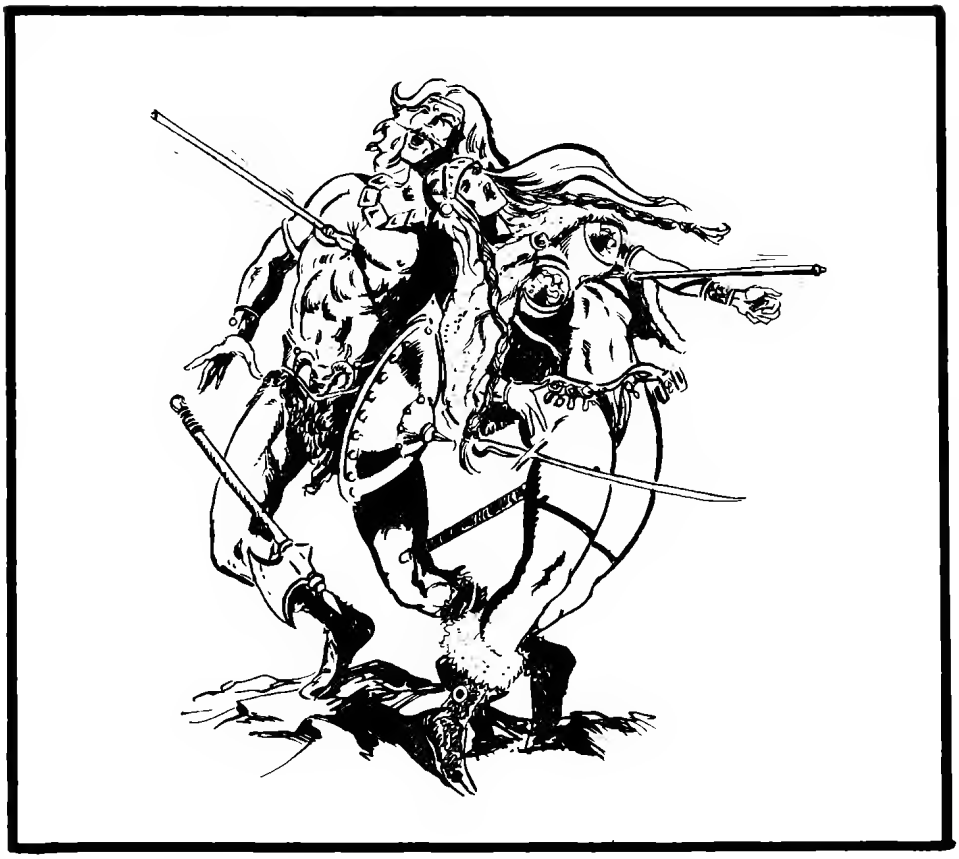
1. A vast, vividly realized setting.
2. A storyline of broad scope, with quests, adventures, and at least some physical action.
3. Characters who do things rather than sit around and bemoan their fate.
4. Primitive, or at least pre-industrial cultures, replete with barbaric splendor, the glamour of antiquity, etc.
5. A feeling for the natural world. This may be the most important feature. Stories about future advertising executives in glass cubicles can only have so much aesthetic appeal. I think there is a very deep psychological appeal in stories which place the characters in the context of nature. We are lacking something in a world of grafitti-covered subway cars and glass skyscrapers. (You'd better shut me up before I start babbling about such old-fashioned concepts as beauty.)
6. A sense of man's place in the universe. This is supposedly the special province of science fiction, but it is too often ignored. The wonder that some of us at least can feel looking at the stars on a dark night with a clear sky---and thus experiencing a vision which the overwhelming majority of the population never has---might just as readily come out as fantasy. More often than not, of late, it has. Fantasy has



got science fiction's old Sense of Wonder.

7. All of the above, with undertones of mysticism.

The point I want to make is that none of these characteristics, including the last one, precludes the story's being science fiction. It just happens that fantasy nowadays better serves the needs of the audience. A science fiction novel which does all these things, and perhaps more, will be just as successful. Which brings us to:



HELLICONIA SPRING
By Brian Aldiss
Atheneum, 1982, 361 pp., $15.95

This is a classic example of a science fiction novel which has virtually all the appeal of fantasy, plus unique science-fictional characteristics. It is sure to be a best-seller. It is even the first volume of a trilogy. What more can a publisher ask? Expect the third volume to make the general best-seller lists. Further, it already is a #1 best-seller in England. I can't say I was surprised to read that in the latest LOCUS. Considering all the above, I can only say it figures.

HELLICONIA SPRING is the story of the rebirth of civilization after a long winter, in the literal sense and otherwise. The planet Helliconia is located in a binary star system, and experiences extremes of heat and cold on a roughly 2500 year cycle. In the few lifetimes covered in the first volume, the environment changes from arctic and barren to temperate an d forested. Consequently the way of life of the human inhabitants must change drastically. They start as Eskimos and end as farmers and city-dwellers.

The place of man in nature and in the cosmos is depicted in a rather extreme way. Every change, every aspect of life is controlled, as the people half understand, by the positions of the two suns in the sky. Culture is completely shaped by, and at the mercy of the environment, all the way down to the devastating plagues which only break out when conditions are just right, and which decide the fates of nations.

Aldiss handles this with considerable intelligence and a good eye for detail. His setting is completely believable. He seems to understand how such societies and ecosystems work. (Only one thing failed to convince: How come cavern-dwellers, who may not see the sun in years, don't have epidemics of rickets?)

You will certainly remember the setting. It's the people that I wonder about. The weakness of this book is that one rarely gets involved with the characters. They are believable, certainly. They never do things which real human beings wouldn't, but we never really get to know them. We are detached observers, rather than participants.

This is largely due to the scope of the book. When the sheer size of the overall story precludes any "plot" other than the most ridiculously drawn-out curse/revenge/quest sort of goings-on, there are basically two approaches open to the writer. He can either tell closely-focussed stories set at crucial stages of the overall development (the method used in A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ), or take that overall development head on, developing a lot of little plots along the way.

Aldiss chose the latter course. Only the prologue, which is a more closely focussed adventure of discovery by one character, is really involving. The rest isn't quite alive, as various conflicts, natural changes, and historical movements interweave. The reader's interest is held, but it's the fascination one might have for crystals growing in an indoor rock garden. The most plot-oriented sections aren't necessarily the most interesting. I found the most exciting parts of the book proper to be those having to do with Helliconia's intellectual renaissance. The story of knowledge is often stronger than the story of individual people. In some ways the book ia reminiscent of the work of James Blish, who was always at his best either in purely intellectual realms, or when describing phenomena.

The lack of strong characters will detract a little from the book's appeal, but not very much. The real protagonist is Helliconia itself, about which many questions are left unanswered, notably how this superficially absurd biological setup came about. About half the life on Helliconia are of Terrestrial origin, including not only homo sapiens and various domestic animals such as pigs and geese, but also deer, bears, mosquitos, fleas, etc. There are hints throughout that Helliconia is an artificial creation. It is closely watched from orbit by Earth folk who realize how odd it is. We shall see.

IMARO
By Charles R. Saunders
DAW Books #459, 1981, 208 pp., $2.50

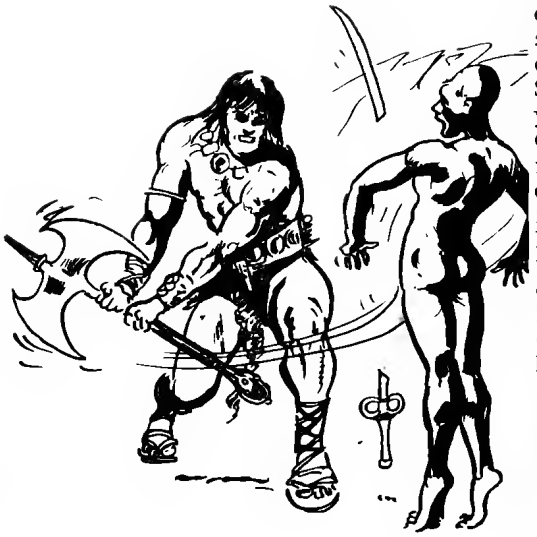
Some of you may have heard of Charles Saunders. He is one of the major names in the world of small-press fantasy magazines, for all that he has never had a story in a newsstand magazine, and has only a

couple mass-market anthology appearances. The advantage of the small fantasy magazines is that they've developed a lot of talent over the past ten years or so. The disadvantage is that they tend to keep that talent locked away. It is necessary for any writer who's going to have a real career to break out of them eventually. It's nice to see Saunders breaking out.

He is, in terms of technique, a competent but not outstanding writer. His uniqueness is his subject matter. He writes about Africa, its legends, myths, customs, cultures, etc. , often changing names and otherwise faking it as most "medieval" type fantasy writers do with Europe, but still incorporating a lot which is fresh and new and genuine.

The hero Imaro is already the star of a well-received series of stories. This novel is a fix-up of some which have appeared in such places as DARK FANTASY, DRAGONBANE, and PHANTASY DIGEST. It isn't a collection disguised as a novel for commercial reasons, but an attempt at a genuine novel. The original stories have been rewritten. There is a unified narrative beginning with Imaro's origin as an outcast of dubious parentage who leaves a barbaric, cattle-herding people. We then follow his career as he grows in sophistication, encounters civilization, and chases after the various people who done him wrong. About the first half of the book goes by without the seams showing. Then they begin to show. The last two episodes are clearly just episodes, for all the last one, "The City of Madness," may be the best. The problem is that, having gotten through with Imaro's origins and growth into manhood, Saunders doesn't seem to know what to do next. Imaro ceases to grow. He gets out of tight spots by sheer brute strength, usually fuelled by relentless hatred, which seems to be his most salient characteristic. The adventure may be exciting, the settings unusual, but for all the monsters he kills, Imaro doesn't have much personality. At the very end, when he meets up with his sidekick, an educated pygmy, he comes alive a little, but it isn't enough.

There's no great insight here. The book doesn't tackle heavy themes. But it is one of the more original and readable action/adventure fantasies to come along in a while. Hopefully Saunders will continue to grow as a writer.



REFERENCE:

BLACKWOOD'S BOOKS
By John Robert Colombo
Hounslow Press (124 Parkview Ave., Toronto, Ontario M2N 3Y5, Canada), 1981, 119 pp., $7.95

Hounslow Press publishes small editions of Canadian-interest books. They are doing an Algernon Blackwood bibliography because Blackwood lived in Canada for a while and wrote several stories with Canadian settings, most notably "The Wendigo." BLACKWOOD'S BOOKS is the first reference work on this important, if sometimes overshadowed (by Lovecraft especially) writer. It contains a listing of all his books, including the contents of his story collections, plus three appendices: a brief life of Blackwood, an article on Blackwood's Canadian years, and an appreciation by Walter Gillings. It contains a lot of information for the Blackwood devotee, but one only wishes for more, like a listing of where the stories originally appeared, and of title changes. (I bring this up because I have a copy of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, Sept. 1931, containing "The Fire Body" by Blackwood, which is not mentioned in Columbo's book. An uncollected story? How many others are there?)

SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS
Edited by E. F. Bleiler
Scribner's, 1982, 623 pp., $55.00

Yet another high-price, high quality collection of author studies intended for libraries. The field for such books must be pretty crowded by now. But this is a good specimen of the type, and worthwhile for any university where science fiction courses are taught, and also of interest to rich fans. It contains 75 essays, most about 4000 words long, some much longer, about just about every important SF writer from Mary Shelley to the present. Of course you can argue that so-and-so is left out, but it's hard to come up with a really major figure who is. Most of the pieces are of very high quality, far more interesting to the knowledgeable reader than these entries usually are. Peter Nicholls on Heinlein struck me as particularly good. The only really dubious one is Colin Wilson on Lovecraft. His judgements seem strange in the light of Lovecraft's posthumous career in the last 15 years or so (e.g. the statement that Lovecraft as a figure is more important than anything he wrote) and he is also quite sloppy about facts. I made a quick list of obvious biographical errors:

HPL never played with other kids as a child. [His letters describe such activities in detail.]

His marriage broke up because he didn't like physical contact. [His wife, who survived till, I think, 1972, said otherwise. Actually the problem was a lack of money, and HPL's refusal to move to Chicago when Sonia got a job there.]

$240 for "The Dunwich Horror" was the largest sum HPL ever earned in his career. [He got more for his two sales to ASTOUNDING.]

He travelled only as far south as Virginia. [He had a couple of long visits in Florida, and was fond of Charleston, South Carolina, even writing a guide to that city, which is in MARGINALIA.]

And so on. No excuse, Mr. Wilson. None at all.

The book as a whole is, by contrast, quite worthwhile.

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM #21
Edited by Sharon R. Gunton
Gale Research, 1982, 600 pp., $95.00

Obviously very few individuals are going to buy this. But these things are interesting to page through in libraries, and they're the place to start if you're doing serious research. CLC #21 consists of excerpts from criticism of important writers, poets, filmmakers, screenwriters, etc. As science fiction becomes more respectable, more and more SF writers are included. This volume has a section on Roger Zelazny. Also of science-fictional interest: Monty Python and Seigel and Schuster (of SUPERMAN fame).

REPRINTS:

THE DOOM THAT CAME TO SARNATH AND OTHER STORIES
By H.P. Lovecraft
Ballantine Books, 1982, 208 pp., $2.50

THE DREAM-QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH
By H. P. Lovecraft
Ballantine, 1982, 241pp., $2.50

These two collections are made up mostly of Lovecraft's "dreamland" fantasies, which are, as he admitted, heavily influenced by Dunsany, but which remain a unique accomplishment in their own right. The star attraction is the title novella in DREAM-QUEST, which is one of the oddest pieces in all fantastic literature. You will either love it or hate it. It's, as the title suggests, a dream fantasy, which might also be described as the work of a berserko-necrophiliac Lewis Carroll. It has all sorts of distinctive touches, including an army of cats, friendly ghouls, and a "marvelous city" of dream which, in classic Lovecraftian fashion, turns out to be a transmogrified version of the hero's own native Boston. The level of invention throughout is staggering. The details range from impressive to silly.

The other stories, most of which also deal with the idea of "dreamland" as a real underworld or other dimension, vary greatly in quality. "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" is a particularly mind-stretching cosmic exercise which is still, I think, conceptually far ahead of most science fiction being published. It must have seemed staggering in 1934.

DREAM-QUEST is the stronger of the two collections. THE DOOM THAT CAME TO SARNATH contains many minor pieces, in addition to some fairly important ones. Of particular interest, for all it has nothing to do with the rest of the book, is "In the Walls of the Eryx," Lovecraft's only interplanetary story, which shows how well he could write straight SF if he tried.

AS IT IS WRITTEN
By Clark Ashton Smith
Donald Grant, 1982, 125 pp., $20.00

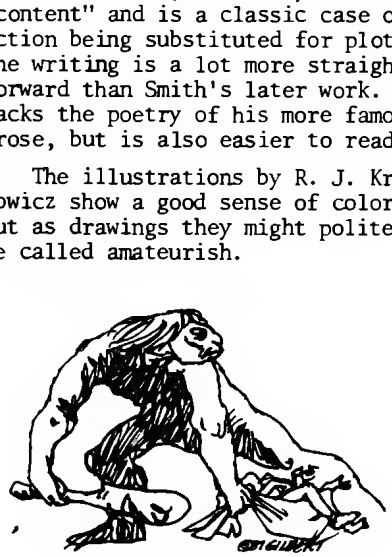
This early and long-lost novella y one of the stalwarts of WEIRD TALES is worthy of more attention than the latest Robert E. Howard barrel-scrapings simply because, unlike Howard, Clark Ashton Smith dead has not proven more prolific than most living authors. Grant's deluxe, limited edition is just right for it, because those readers seriously interested in Smith will grab it up

at once, and those not will ignore it. This isn't the sort of thing that's going to see a mass market paperback edition soon.

The story was apparently written arounf 1912 and sold to the legendary THRILL BOOK, which folded before publishing it. The manuscript remained in limbo for over fifty years, passing first from Street and Smith to Conde Nast, then to the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University. All this while it remained unidentified, since it was originally submitted under a pseudonym. Up until his death in 1961, Smith apparently never tried to rescue it. Only recently, through diligent research, was it recognized for what it was.

The curiosity value is undeniable. As a reading experience, it's the sort of standard pulp action fiction which is diverting in small doses. Whenever a pulp writer had trouble plotting he fell back on that old reliable: hero gets his fanny caught in a bear trap; spends the rest of the story getting out. So, in an oriental setting, there are chases, fights, the discovery of a lost city, a chance encounter with a mysterious Chinaman (of which nothing comes), more pursuit by giant apes, and finally a maiden rescued from an evil rajah. In modern editorial terms, the story has no "content" and is a classic case of action being substituted for plot. The writing is a lot more straightforward than Smith's later work. It lacks the poetry of his more famous prose, but is also easier to read.

The illustrations by R. J. Krupowicz show a good sense of color, but as drawings they might politely be called amateurish.



SMALL PRESS MAGAZINES
Reviewed By Darrell Schweitzer

There's an impressive pile of zines to be reviewed this time. The whole Small Press seems to be out in force. Therefore, no introductory remarks, save that Small Press magazines tend to stay in print for months or even years, so reviewing a six-month-old little magazine is considerably less useless than reviewing an ANALOG of similar vintage.

WEIRDBOOK 16 is the latest manifestation of the Grandaddy Of The All, the oldest surviving fantasy small press magazine and the first significant one in the current phase of the field's development. Unfortunately, this isn't the best issue, mostly because nothing really stands out, the way Thomas Lyman's "The Prayer Machine" did last issue. The only story I'd consider really bad is "The Hell of Black Lines" by the perplexing William Scott Home, who wrote one splendid story years ago and has been unreadable since. His prose is absolutely torturous. Brian Lumley tortures us a bit less in "Treasure of the Scarlet Scorpion", which is a perfectly well imagined and structured tale, replete with amusing ironies, but told in a hokey "archaic" style sure to scrape fingernails across the blackboard of your brain. There's even a barbarian who barbarously mixes words like "certes" in with perfectly modern idiom.

James William Hjort's "Yhagni's Priest" is a Cthulhu Mythos story which will delight people who like to be reassured that they still do write 'em like they used to. I found the writing adequate and only occasionally turgid. There is a quite interesting touch as the hero wakes up with his memory gone, having forgotten about his blasphemous involvement with Outer Horrors. He's wiped clean and has to choose good or evil. (Imagine if Wilbur Whateley woke up one morning and didn't know he was a bad guy.) Unfortunately, before this conflict gets anywhere, the Usual Ending sets in. (A Cthulhu Mythos protagonist doesn't protag, you see. He merely exists to be eaten.) There are moments of effective grue.

"Leanthe's Tower" by Colin Saxton is rather well written, and surprisingly erotic for a magazine like this. But it doesn't make lots of sense. There's this totally innocent Young Thing in this paradise without

anything at all to do. Doesn't she get bored out of her skull?

"How Jacquerel Was Slain by the God Brann" is an adequate sword and sorcery piece by Janet Fox, who sometimes tends to forget everybody but the most important people in a scene rather in the way that, in movies, the hero and villain can meet in the midst of a thundering battle, and suddenly there's no battle anymore. When the villain dies, he does so in silence. I wonder why the assorted guards and the like don't merely skewer the heroine when she's standing around, having overcome the villain.

All this makes "The Innocent Altar" by Edmund Shirlan the best story in the issue. A smooth, unobtrusive style and a charming plot keep you going: A girl is raised in total isolation from the world so that she will not be "infected" with evil. Of course, this total innocent is just what the local coven needs for their human sacrifice. Enter a celebrated white magician and general master of the occult. If Shirlan develops his characters a little more, he might have something like a latter-day Jules de Grandin series going. (And, taking a warning from Quinn, his might be less hackneyed.)

My own contribution to this issue is a one-act play, "The Forest Dream", which, it may surprise readers to learn, was actually written to be performed. Directors and producers inform me that it's gloriously unstageable. You see, when I wrote it, I was mostly familiar with college theatre, and I naively designed the thing to be put on in such a fashion. But the difference between college theatre and professional theatre is that a college production has no budget and a lot of free actors, while a professional one has no budget and actors who want to be paid. Plays which take place in a single room and have a cast of three are very much in demand these days. What makes a director cringe at my little extravaganza is not that somebody falls off the edge of the world at the end, but that I blithely call for a troop of belly dancers, an army, a whole court full of noble lords and ladies, etc. ("Enter as many as possible", as was allegedly written in the margins of Shakespeare's scripts.)

This issue of WEIRDBOOK has an effective cover by Stephen Fabian, fair to middling interiors by various artists and some poetry. Accompanying it is FANTASY MONGERS #3, a collection of letters, comments by the editor, reviews and ads.

WHISPERS 15/16 is the first new issue of this top magazine in about two years. From its front color cover (by John Stewart) to its back color cover (by Hannes Bok), it is a superb production job. When you start thinking about what this digest-sized magazine would cost if issued by a commercial publisher as a trade paperback, the five-dollar cover price doesn't seem exorbitant at all.

The new issue is devoted in part to the works of Ramsey Campbell, and includes an interview with him, an article about his work and three original stories. Of these, "Out of Copyright" is probably the best, deftly mixing horror and sly humor. It's about a sleazy anthologist who comes to a bad end when he dares to meddle with the text of a story he's pirating. "Conversion" is a rather minor gimmick piece, which hinges on a sudden shift in perspective. It's the sort of story that would be wrecked if I gave away the ending, so I won't. "Eye of Childhood" is very typical Campbell, all about brooding menace and slow decay in a particularly grungy Liverpool slum. (I wonder how the city fathers take the way their very own local writer displays his home town to the world ....)

The other fiction in the issue is of varying interest. Karl Edward Wagner's novella "Beyond Any Measure" superbly mixes reincarnation, vampires and modern decadence. It's a relief to encounter a modern-scene horror story that doesn't have a vaguely Victorian air to it. Here, where the Victorian elements enter, they belong. Otherwise the characters exist in a London that includes punk rockers, THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW and cocaine parties.

"The Red Death" by Ray Russell is actually a screen treatment of what would have been a much better version of Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" than was actually filmed. It is excellently illustrated by Fabian.

"The Warrior Who Did Not Know Fear" by Gerald W. Page almost captures the fantastic, brooding atmosphere of a good Samurai movie (specifically, I have THRONE OF BLOOD in mind), but Page's is sometimes subtle in the wrong places, and given to almost ridiculous exaggeration in others. I just cannot believe a medieval-style battle in which only one guy is left standing on one side, and nobody on the other. Battles are not like that. If they were, no one could afford to fight them.

"Nemo Me Impune Lacessit" by Michael Shea is a Cthulhu Mythos story, better than most in that it is written in a modern style rather than an adjectival first-person delerious, but essentially trivial. A cuckolded husband who just happens to be a servant of the Old Ones feeds his enemies to Things in various elaborate ways. There is no complication or particular point.

"Fair Trade" by William F. Nolan, "Old Woman" by Joel Hagen and "The House at Evening" by Frances Garfield are all rather routine, although the Nolan is surprisingly effective for what it is: a corpse-comes-back-for-revenge story told in hillbilly dialect.

WHISPERS continues to maintain the high standard it established for itself when it began nine years ago. Not all the stories are great, but some of them are, and issue-for-issue it's considerably better than any of the newsstand magazines. (WHISPERS 17/18, out soon will be another double issue, this time devoted to Stephen King, with new material by him.)

FANTASY TALES is another old standby, now in its sixth year of publication. FT seems to be the most "pulpish" of the major small press magazines. The stories tend to go for unmitigated fright effects, often with twist endings and a genuine zest for grue. The writing is usually on a quite competent level, but most of the stories draw a "not quite" reaction from me.

Issue #9 is one of the best. All the stories are to some degree enjoyable. There are no masterpieces, but nothing is noticeably bad either.

Adam Nichols' novelet "Dead Birds Singing in the Black of Night" is the author's debut in British small press magazines, we are told, without mention of appearances elsewhere. If this is a first sale, it's a pretty good one. There are static paragraphs of exposition, which a more experienced writer would know to avoid, but Nichols shows a definite flare for atmosphere and a middling ability to depict character. The characters are quite convincing while the story is in progress, at least. The most serious flaw is that as the ending approaches, one realizes that the story is an adaptation of a song Fairport Convention does, called

"Crazy Man Michael". Now, adapting a song into a story is a perfectly valid technique. A song will usually just relate events. The story-writer's job is to force it to make sense, supplying motivation, background, additional incidents. Often this requires a considerable amount of invention. The best results come when the author intersects with the ballad, rather than merely following it. Nichols begins well, but toward the end just follows, and if you know the song, you know how the story turns out.

"The Grey Horde" by David Malpass is admittedly a Clark Ashton Smith imitation, better than most, but there are no surprises. The eldritch doom comes on schedule, but Malpass does have some power of invention. He does not, alas, have a careful eye for detail. Consider: An army of reanimated corpses can't be killed, and cannot know fear. So what constitutes defeat? Why should they retreat in disarray? Malpass never tells us, but they do.

"The Frolic" by Thomas Ligotti is a moderately effective there's-a-lunatic-on-the-loose story, comparable to many such efforts by Robert Bloch.

"The Laughter of Han" by Lin Carter is one of his Dunsany-derived Simrana stories, basically a barbarian version of "The Emperor's New Clothes". Zun, the warrior, is incredibly macho, you see. He goes out of his way to seem fierce, to maintain his image. Ultimately this does not work.

"The Strange Years" by Brian Lumley is the weakest story in the issue, little more than a synopsis of events. I can't say I was much impressed.

Last but not least, "October Treat" by Philip C. Heath. A bunch of country kids decide to cap off their Mischief Night activities by killing a vampire. It's all a gag, set up by one of them. Things do not go as the perpetrator expects, nor, to Heath's credit, quite the way the reader does either.

To sum up FANTASY TALES: A fairly good fix of this sort of stuff for addicts, but it isn't likely to hook anybody new. Better than average packaging, including an extremely effective wraparound cover by Jim Pitts.

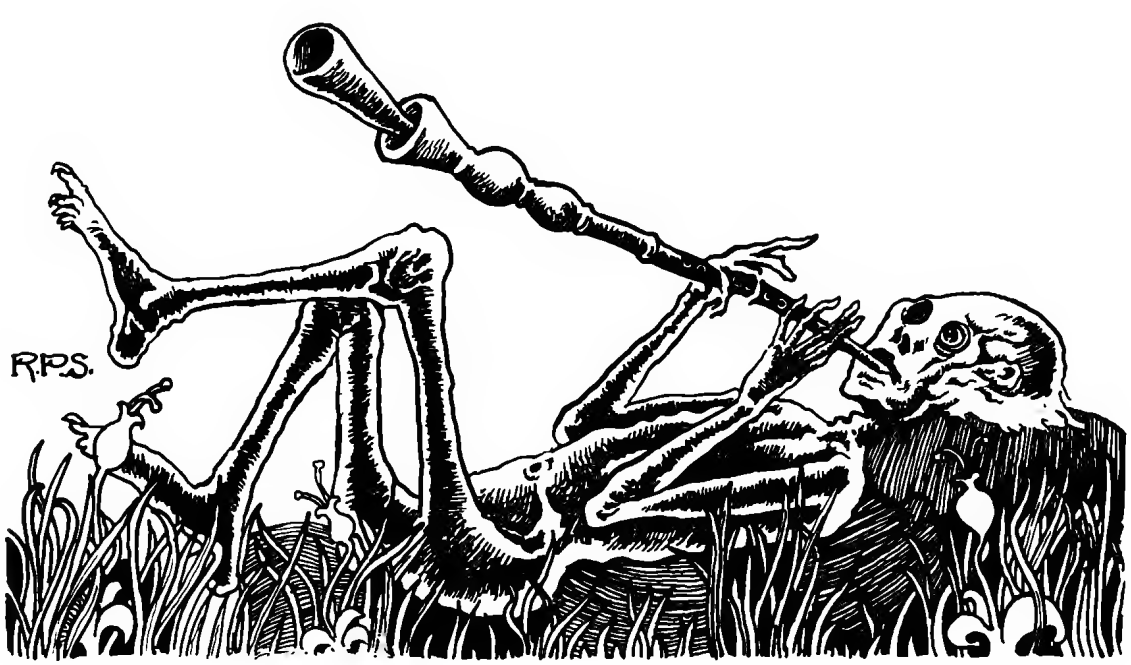
On the subject of basically okay stories, there are two in the most recent (#14, Spring 1982) issue of SORCERER'S APPRENTICE. "From the Tree of Time" by Fred Saberhagen has Sherlock Holmes and Dracula working together to solve a mystery. All very charming, but I didn't like the resolution hinging so completely on an arbitrary rule of vampiric lore invented by Saberhagen. Also charming, if slight, is "The Sword and the Curse" by Lee Duigon, in which a barbarian hero in a typical wish-fulfillment imaginary world comes across a hideous menace: an enchanted sword which removes all cliches.

Now to turn to a major new entry into the field, INTERZONE #1. I've been predicting a magazine like this for years. Basically, the sort of fiction we used to call "new wave" doesn't have a wide enough appeal to support a commercial magazine, but there is a small and loyal audience out there. That's the basic prerequisite for a successful little magazine. I think INTERZONE is going to do well, and further, I think anthologists ought to watch it closely for stories of interest to a larger audience.

It's not quite fair to say the magazine is what NEW WORLDS might have been like if the stories were coherent, but it is accurate to say that any of the stories in the first issue could have appeared in the later NEW WORLDS. Certainly the best of them is Keith Roberts' "Kitemaster" which has all the characteristics of a good Roberts story: vivid, atmospheric and filled with details of a carefully-worked-out alternate technology. The observation kites (used by people in a post-holocaust world to watch for demons) are full as good and as well realized an invention as the highway-traveling trains in PAVANNE.

John Sladek's "Guesting" is a not-quite-successful bit of satire, about an extra-terrestrial who is to be presented to the world on a TV variety show, then gets cancelled in the interest of ratings. There is some good comic invention here, but it's scattershot, not building to any particular point, as in Sladek's best work.

"The New Rays" by M. John Harrison is about a woman undergoing difficult (if vaguely described) treatments for an unspecified disease. There are odd characters and odd happenings at the clinic, and nothing makes a large amount of sense.



The story is what is sometimes called (I think the term comes from Stanley Schmidt) "macro-murky". You can tell what is going on scene by scene, but not overall. (The opposite is "micro-murky", where you can't tell scene by scene, or even paragraph by paragraph as in a James Sallis story.) Harrison obviously has a lot of talent. He occasionally writes very well indeed. I keep waiting for him to turn into a major writer. I'm still waiting, unfortunately.

This leaves us with two stories which are not science fiction or fantasy, but what the editors loosely call "imaginative" fiction, "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe" by Angela Carter, and "The Brothel in Rosenstrasse" by Michael Moorcock. It seems to be their intent to stretch things considerably further than is usually done in the commercial magazines, and this may well turn out to be the real strength of INTERZONE: the inclusion of "odd" stories that don't fit into any convenient genre. The Carter is certainly worth reading. It's basically a sensitively-done series of impressions of the childhood of Poe, which in a speculative way, suggests the origins of many of his obsessions and themes. The Moorcock piece is an excerpt from a novel of the same title. One gets the impression that Moorcock, after all his other varied accomplishments, would now like to be a great Victorian novelist. Of course, he can put a lot more explicit sex into his work than could, say, Thackeray or George Meredith. The excerpt doesn't really stand on its own, but is well written. It's probably a good book.

Charter subscribers to INTERZONE get as a bonus a limited edition pamphlet containing a novella by J.G. Ballard, "News From the Sun", which was originally published in a British magazine, AMBIT. I don't know if they have any left, but you might ask. The story is the absolute quintessence of anti-science fiction, the premise being that because space flight is such a violation of the laws of nature, there being things Man Was Not Meant To Know, astronauts have brought back with them a "time disease", which causes people to lapse into unconsciousness (or timelessness) for increasingly long periods, until they have only a few minutes of awareness a day and starve to death. True to form, the typical Ballard protagonists are at first passive to impending disaster, then begin to think it a good idea. Also true to form, the speculations on the nature and perception of time are fascinating, and the story has moments of stark, bizarre beauty. But it is robbed of much of its power by Ballard's insistence that space travel is evil. Fritz Leiber used a somewhat similar idea in "The Man Who Never Grew Young", in which the natural universe is so repelled by the horror of the Hiroshima bombing that time starts running backwards, away from the event. That story works because most readers share or at least understand Leiber's feelings about the A-bomb. But I have a hunch that seventy-five years from now some inhabitant of a space colony is going to access the Collected Works of J.G. Ballard on the library computer, read "News From the Sun" and find it quaintly incomprehensible.

INTERZONE is worth getting. If it doesn't repeat the mistakes of the past, it may turn out to be influential well out of proportion to its circulation.

Just in: four issues, published simultaneously, of W. Paul Ganley's EERIE COUNTRY (#6-9), which is a companion to WEIRDBOOK, consisting of the work of lesser-known authors. This looks very much like the WEIRDBOOK of ten years ago. The writers include John Wysocki, Walter Shedlofsky, Gordon Linzner, Phyllis Ann Karr, W. Fraser Sandercombe and others familiar to long-time WEIRDBOOK readers. The artwork ranges from good to absolutely awful, the cover on #9 (by Dan Day) being the best, the completely inexcusable mess on #6 (by an "artist" who shall remain nameless) being the worst. EERIE COUNTRY is not of as great interest as WEIRDBOOK but it may be just the thing for fans of Weirdbook Press publications.

WEIRDBOOK. W. Paul Ganley, POB #149, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226. $4.50 per copy, 3/$10 or 7/$20. (Note address change. The P.O. switched boxes on him.)

WHISPERS. Stuart Schiff, 70 Highland Avenue, Binghamton, NY 13905. Double-issue $5.00; two double-issues $8.75.

FANTASY TALES. Stephen Jones, 73 Danes Court, North End Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0AE, England. 75p or $2.50 per copy.

SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Flying Buffalo, Inc., POB #1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252. $2.50, 6/$12.00.

INTERZONE. 28 Duckett Road, London N4 1BN, England. British subscriptions are 5£ per 4 issues; American subscriptions are $10.00 for 4 issues, and should be sent to INTERZONE, Patchin Place, New York, NY 10011.

EERIE COUNTRY. Same address as WEIRDBOOK. $2.00 per copy. Subscriptions beginning next issue, 4/$6.00.

RAISING HACKLES

FANTASY AS CANCER: PART I

BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT

In my years of reading and reporting SF, I've watched the field, impacted by the financial success of STAR WARS, grow and change. I have not liked a lot of what I've seen. And over the years I've developed some pretty strong ideas and opinions about SF. But, I've always felt constrained, hemmed in by the need to be objective in my news reporting, lacking the appropriate forum in which to express my frustrations with, feelings and observations on, the SF genre.

There are tremendous problems with the current state of science fiction and future columns will deal with a great many of them, but for this first column I will comment on what I think is the most pressing. A problem so dangerous it threatens to destroy the entire meaning of SF, and to irrevocably change the whole genre. It is fantasy. Fantasy is a cancer attacking the SF field, drinking away its precious bodily fluids of reason and rationality.

You ever notice when you go to buy SF, how much of what is marketed as science fiction is really fantasy? I have. When I started reading SF there was a good chance that when you picked up a book labeled SF it was science fiction. It had something to do with knowledge, the empirical method -- and ofttimes, *shock* even science. The author tried to make whatever fantastic premise appeared in the book plausible, usually by glibly-worded rubber science, but still plausible. Oh, sure, there was the rare fantasy novel or sword-n-sorcery story but they were the exception and it was easy for the reader, who like me, liked science fiction, but disliked fantasy (and its bastard off-spring, sword-n-sorcery and occult horror), to avoid it.

Today the SF field is quite different. The bookstore shelves abound with fantasy and sword-n-sorcery -- elves and trolls, demons and dwarves, sadistic macho muscular sword-n-jockstrap barbarian warriors, masochistic nubile barbarian maidens (great role-models for young kids there) -- the science fiction book is a rarity. Some statistics from the last several months of new paperback releases marketed as SF: only 46% were even remotely science fiction, and of those more than half had occult/fantasy imagery on the cover (they were being slanted to a fantasy audience) and others were questionable as science fiction, as witness the following blurb from James Kahn's TIME'S DARK LAUGHTER published by Del Rey Books:

> "Five years have passed since Josh Green, the Scribe and Beauty the Centaur set out across Southern California to find the creatures who had destroyed their homes and carried off their human wives."

(Gosh darn, golly gee whiz, guys and gals, I guess that's real SF.) Only one out of five books were science fiction and all were by authors with a track record of at least five previous books. (More on that last item later.)

The fact is fantasy has supplanted science fiction in the SF field. For those who are concerned, three major questions arise: What caused this, what will the results be, and what can be done about it.

I don't know if you can point to any one particular thing and say that is what has caused the cancerous growth of fantasy in SF. Norman Spinrad has commented that the takeover of the entertainment media by corporate conglomerates has had a lowest common denominator effect on movies/TV and SF (among other areas). Fantasy is certainly the lowest common denominator of SF. Gregory Benford, in a marvelous article in Charles Platt's PATCHIN REVIEW, "Fantasy As Pollution," says good fantasy is easier to write than good science fiction and also points out that fantasy looks to the past while science fiction looks to the future. Richard Geis, my esteemed editor, has suggested that it is the result of more women editors and more women reading SF. I suspect that it is a little of all of the above-mentioned factors as well as the impact of that dreary Dungeons-and-Dragons game (a game so intellectually debilitating it's worth a column all its own, except I don't want to give TSR any more publicity than they deserve; they've already done enough damage this year by foisting George Scithers on us again). The one cause that nobody has mentioned specifically, although Greg Benford came close in his article, is that the current popularity of fantasy (which I suspect is more a marketing perception than a genuine consumer taste) is a reaction against technology. Most of the editors new to SF and a lot that aren't, are subconsciously

frightened by technology (as are most readers and others). Most have a Liberal Arts background, and the Liberal Arts collegiate institutions in this country have been anti-tech since the start of the century. I ought to know -- I have a Liberal Arts degree in English, I've seen the Liberal Arts professors' reactions to technology up close and personal; most go into a spas attack at the mere mention of the word computer, let alone science. Most scoffed at SF, although a surprising number like fantasy. I had a Shakespeare prof who confided to me one day that he wished he'd been born in the days of aristocracy for he disliked democracy intensely. He referred to it sneeringly as "the great leveler." Of course, what he conveniently forgets as do most readers of fantasy and other yearners for the past (like the SCA), is that if most of them

had been born in the past they would have been serfs or slaves who would most likely have spent their entire existence (of about 35 to 50 years max.) in the fields at hard labor. And if one of the vaunted nobles decided he was going to attack another noble, and said serf's fields or house was in the way, tough. The great leveler, indeed.

Now somebody reading this is going to say, but there are a lot of computer programmers who like fantasy, and some even belong to the SCA; they're certainly not anti-tech. Well, of course they are, I said it was mostly subconscious in some cases.

The results. One of them is already apparent; I see a lot more first fantasy novelists than I do science fiction novelists. Another result is a growing disillusionment with the SF field on the part of both older and younger readers. Countless times I've been in stores or at clubs when SF was brought up, and many people said that they used to read SF but the current stuff just wasn't as good. When pressed, most admitted that it was the fantasy which they detested and there is so much of it today that they can't be sure of buying science fiction when they see SF or science fiction on the spine of a book, so rather than hassle, most just stop reading SF; others only read a few authors they can trust.

Now most of these people are not your hard-core fans or convention goers. Some people have stated that a few of the less sophisticated editors would go to conventions and after a weekend of seeing pasty untanned flesh parading around in a variety of "barbarian" costumes, decide that SF readers read mostly fantasy. This might have happened (I mean, how many publishers do market surveys to attempt to find out who their readers are?), but as for those who hold the notion that most convention goers are fantasy fans, or if they aren't, at least they haven't noticed what is going on in SF or don't care, I just wish they had been to a few panels at this year's NorwesCon. In particular the "Illiterate in SF" panel, where a few unprepared writers got an earful (with Norman Spinrad leading the verbal charge from the back of the room).

I believe that what we are seeing is a possible exodus of disgruntled readers from the SF field. At the least, less of a willingness on the part of many readers to take a chance on an unknown first novelist. This in turn will make it more difficult for newer science fiction writers who could help revitalize the field, but will be shut out of most markets or be forced to write fantasy to put food on the table. The end result of fantasy's cancerous explosion could leave the SF field as stagnant and stultified as the Western or the Gothic, or as stodgy and stuffy as the academic novel. It will also mean many longtime readers like myself moving into the thriller/suspense mainstream contemporary/near-future genre where the plots are exciting, the writing is better and there isn't a trace of faaantasy. In fact, I think the thriller/suspense near-future genre is already taking over a great deal of territory abandoned by the SF field (but that is another column).

Finally, what can be done? Well, it would help if most currently enthused by faaantasy would just grow up. I mean I enjoyed fairy tales when I was a child. But I outgrew them. Most of those writers and readers who enjoy faaantasy are, I'm afraid, arrested adolescents who can't see how ridiculous and juvenile the writings of most fantasists from Dunsany through Howard, Lovecraft and up to Terry Brooks, have been. You would think that the readers of faaantasy would get tired and want some mature adult literature for once.

The rest of us can begin fighting back, and more on that in my next column.

FANTASY AND THE BELIEVING READER

BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

For the last half-century English-language literary criticism has been captured by a system of belief called Modernism or, in its later permutations, New Criticism. If literary criticism were merely a club for people who think they understand Ezra Pound, there would be no reason for fantasy writers and readers to take it into account. Unfortunately, however, this particular school of literary criticism has acquired the status, in too many minds, of Truth. Too many writers, eager to understand what it is that makes their stories happen, have learned to say "Classicism" and "Romanticism" as if Hulme's use of the words made any sense; to speak contemptuously of "naive identification" and the "pathetic fallacy"; and to discuss their own work as if the reason for writing stories were to convey meanings in such a way that only a trained reader can receive them -- and the untrained reader can receive nothing at all. With more and more fantasy writers being affected by this critical movement, and more and more critics turning their techniques to fantasy, it is time that this school of literary criticism were put in perspective in relation to fantasy stories.

AUTHORITY FOR BELIEF

Literary criticism is the stories we tell ourselves about our stories. When we speak of a literary work's "meaning" we may be telling a story about how the author intended the work to be read, how the proper audience of the work would have understood it, how the work is received by a modern audience, what the work tells us about the author and his community or even how we think the work should have been written and how it compares to that standard of measurement. In all cases, however, we are telling a story -- that is, we are giving an ordered account of casually related events.

By tacit agreement we believe our literary stories in one way, as fiction and our critical stories another way, as history. No one would attempt to prove that, say HAMLET is "true" or "false", though we regard it as being a truthful play. No one would dream of criticizing Shakespeare's writing of the play because Claudius didn't "really" kill Hamlet's father. The center of belief in fiction is in the author's assertions of causal relationships -- from this there is no appeal. On the other hand, when Stephen Dedalus argues that HAMLET is Shakespeare's working out of his own psychological problems caused by the death of his son Hamnet, we can protest that this argument is false or invalid or not justified by the evidence. The center of belief in criticism is historical -- the ultimate authority from which there is no appeal is the "real" event. Since, of course, the "real" event is forever unascertainable, we can quarrel forever about proof in criticism (and all history). What does HAMLET really mean? Is the story we tell about HAMLET true or false? In the meantime, however, while we may assert that Stephen Dedalus's account of HAMLET is false, we cannot say meaningfully that it is "true" or "false" that Dedalus said it, for Dedalus exists as a character in fiction and if Joyce tells us Dedalus said it, we must accept this without appeal, unless Joyce himself gives us reason within the text to doubt his own statement.

This distinction between fictional and historical centers of belief is rarely clearcut, however. Historical and realistic fiction both imply some appeal to the historical center of belief, for example. In earlier times, writers and readers were not so fussy about what must be justified by "reality" and what might be authoritatively invented by the writer. Where an individual writer and his audience place themselves on that continuum varies from work to work, even from paragraph to paragraph and individual readers, too, will bestow or withdraw authority from a story on a historical or fictional basis depending on their own expectations and experience.

WAYS OF BELIEVING

When a writer tells a story to his community, he will, consciously or not, assume that the community will define itself in relation to the story. I have noticed differences in the way I believe stories, whether fictional or historical, and for clarity I distinguish three general types of belief: epic, mythic and critical. These names are not arbitrarily chosen -- I mean them to resonate with many old intentions and contrast with many old extensions of the words. However, they are not parallel terms, and I wish them to be; and since I will use them in a restricted and in some ways arbitrary way, right alongside the more traditional meanings, I will risk annoying you with affectation and will distinguish these special senses and odd grammatical uses of the words with etymologically unjustifiable but visually parallel spelling changes.

Epick is all story that is received by a group as its own story -- as true of that group. It is all story that tells who we are as opposed to who they are. Most of the Old Testament was originally written and read epickly, because the audience was the people of the book. They received it as an account of how we came out of Egypt, how we prospered or declined in accordance with our obedience to or rebellion against God.

Mythick is all story that is received by readers as true of all human beings, and therefore lets each reader define himself as like or unlike the characters in the book. It is believed on a personal, not group level.

Epick and mythick are alike, however, in this: The decision about whether or not to believe is not consciously made. The story simply is or is not true. The self is nam-

ed by the story, and so to doubt the story is to rename the self.

Critick is all story that is received by readers as being detached from them. It defines the reader neither as a human being nor as a member of a group. Rather, critickal readers evaluate the meaning or truth of the story consciously, usually detaching the meaning from the story itself.

Because critical readers read, not believing, but instead identifying and detaching meanings from the story, they are incapable of properly receiving a story that was written mythickly or epickly: They cannot receive a story that was written from belief. Likewise, mythick and epick readers, because they believe as they read, do not usually discern and detach meanings. The two methods are not compatible. Once I have treated a story critickly, I am no longer capable of treating it mythickly or epickly; I can only pretend to do so, or tell myself a story about what it was like when I was capable of participatory reading.

CRITICISM AS STORY

Because criticism is also telling stories, however, it is important to remember that a critic can be treating a literary work one way and treating his own story about that work in another. Critics generally read all literary works critickly, which leads to attempts to decode FAERIE QUEENE, map ULYSSES, patronize the naivete of Edgar Rice Burroughs, or despise the superficiality of Pope. The critic almost invariably believes his own story about these works. Only a few critics in each generation are able to write their criticism critickly, to detach themselves from their own stories about stories.

At that moment I seem to be functioning as a critickal critic, for I am aware that my definitions, my naming, my stories about stories about stories are all artificial constructs and not "true", but merely useful. However, this account of my own attitude is also a story and to be critickal I must call it into question, because in fact I would not write these ideas if I did not, at some point along the way, believe in them. I at least believe in my unbelief, which certainly names me as a believer. Which could bring me to paradox if it were not for the fact that part of the story that I tell is that belief is, at some point, inescapable. Whoever detaches himself from one story and ceases to name himself in relation to it invariably attaches to another story, if only the story that he is now detached.

Of course you see where this leads. Coleridge and Wordsworth must define themselves as different from their predecessors and yet identify themselves as belonging in the same company. They are Milton, but they are not-Milton, just as a child names himself as Mother and not-Mother. They treat their predecessors' stories critickly, detaching themselves from those stories. They replace it with their own epick story, which they believe and which accounts for their predecessors and themselves and sets the world in order. T.S. Eliot and others must repeat the task, endlessly redefining themselves. It is the universal pattern of all writers that they must both identify themselves with and distinguish themselves from their predecessors.

Yet this account (an oversimplification of Bloom) is also a story. It is epick to those who believe it as a true account of how we (literateurs) work. It is mythick to those who believe that this process of naming through doubting old stories and telling new ones is universal.

Those who tell themselves the story that naive (mythickal or epickal) belief is primitive, while detached, critickal understanding is more advanced, are inevitably disturbed by this circularity, for if the critickal view is "better" or more elevated, this account of it makes true critick forever as unapproachable as true reality. The fully detached stance is impossible, because the detached stance itself requires belief in detachment.

But this is not disturbing to those who believe that only a small number of our stories can be received critickly. We could not live if we were critickal about even a small fraction of the stories we are told. The critic who no longer believes

the capitalist story probably still believes the mythick stories of gravity, humanity and fair play. The critic who no longer believes in the Bible epickly or mythickly probably still believes in the objective reality of bread and the causal relationship between chewing, swallowing and surviving. Because the critickal view is only possible to the unbeliever, and all thought and language depend ultimately upon unquestioned belief in something at some point, to regard the critickal view as divine is to consign oneself forever to hell.

THE CRITIC'S TALE

The novel began as a rebellion against romance. Romance, which had been the soul of an age in which real knights shed real blood, no longer satisfied uncourtly writers, who turned to writing romances about their contemporaries and called them "new" romances, or novels. The novel caught on, not because it appealed to intellectuals, but because ordinary readers loved it.

Since then, however, the novel has been captured by another story, a critical tale of self-existing texts, in which it is praiseworthy to put distance between the reader and the story, in which it is forbidden for a "good" reader to identify with a character or consider his own experience of the novel as anything more than the "pathetic fallacy". All that was valuable in novels was that which was publicly verifiable. In this way criticism could approach the absolute correctness of

science, in which only repeatable public experience is regarded as valid.

Literateurs found this method exciting and productive, and so they believed it and started acting it out. They kept their distance from the texts they read, and instead analyzed, breaking stories into pieces, discovering connections between them, and then writing elaborate discursive paraphrases of the "meaning" of this or that great work of literature. The result was the creation of a special priesthood of correct readers, together building a tower of stories about stories which, presumably, would take them to heaven.

The result was sometimes absurdity, as when scholars who did not believe in Milton's God thought they could understand Milton's work. And as these priests of detached and transcendental reading told each other more and more stories about stories, writers began to believe them and write fiction for them. Such fiction was no longer written to be believed. It was written to be analyzed and translated into discourse, and the only story that was believed anymore was the epick tale of the pure-minded critic, who, using absolute standards, officially given him by observation but actually given him by God, decided what was good and what was bad in fiction. Trembling, the writers who believed in this story awaited the verdict of the critics, who sometimes turned their thumbs upward, but more often proved their power by destroying the poor supplicant with his first novel.

Unfortunately, the majority of literature in the world does not fit this critical method. When most stories are analyzed, they break down into a jumble of meaningless fragments that seem almost interchangeable with the fragments of every other such story. To the critic who guards the temple doors, such tales are plainly unworthy offerings at the altar, for they cannot be consumed by the hungry horde of priests behind the curtain. It is dust on their tongues.

Fantasy is one such sort of writing. Critics examine it and find strong-thewed heroes saving damsels in distress, magic rings and prophecies, dark forces opposing the bright light of goodness, and the critics say, "Cardboard characters. Endless repetition of meaningless conventions. Hack writing. Childish oversimplification of good and evil. Obviously written for the adolescent mind. Wish-fulfillment. Bourgeois and fascist and sexist and racist. Pure trash". And ah! the most damning epithet of all: "Escapist".

The bourgeois, unpriestly reader leaves his dull world of work and worry and escapes to a land of magic, where good and evil are clearly separated, where he can pretend that he is the strong and fearless hero, where he doesn't have to cope with reality. And since this reader does not read deciphering meanings from the text, he is obviously not seeking truth, but rather avoiding thought. Only the stupid or the lazy read it.

Thus the critic-priests tell a story about fantasy that explains away their inability to apply their method to it. Any work that cannot be coped with is disposed of. And so the critics have created their epick tale of good literature clearly separated from bad literature, in which a few strong, heroic writers and critics stand against the evil, swarming masses of subhuman intellect, hewing the monsters Fantasy, Mystery, Science Fiction, Gothic, Historical, in order to rescue the virgin damsel Truth and take her safely home, where she may be raped at will.

The tragedy is not that so many critics believe this story and act it out, dressing up in their tweeds and sweaters to go quarrel about minor points of doctrine at MLA and other conferences. The tragedy is that those who are condemned by them, excluded by them, also tend to believe this story, and regard themselves as second-class citizens. The result is that they either apologize for the stories they love, deny those stories, or try pathetically to make those stories fit the standards of the critic-priests, who occasionally, grudgingly, admit such works into the canon of minor works. But only after the "meaning" of the work has safely been detached and translated into discourse. And occasionally a work of fantasy is so important that it cannot be ignored. Then the critics must work over the story unbidden, getting it under control as quickly and thoroughly as possible, lest too many readers discover that they have had a powerful experience that was far better than anything the critic-priests ever gave them.

We can see this process at work with THE LORD OF THE RINGS. The book was written by a formidable scholar, but he was not a critic-priest. He was a lover of old stories that were told back when people willingly sat open-mouthed listening to tales of heroes. Saga, epic, myth, fairy tale -- and Tolkien set out to write just such a story. He declared again and again that he detested allegory in all its forms, including modern symbolism. He was not writing meanings. He was telling a story. Of course, the critic-priests already have an answer to that. Never listen to the writer, they say. Only examine the text. Writers have an embarrassing way of scoffing at the critic's interpretations. The text, however, submits silently to torture and dismemberment.

In LORD OF THE RINGS, the three characters of Frodo, Sam and Gollum are really three aspects of a single character. Frodo is the superego, Sam the ego, Gollum the id. We have the story firmly under control, for we have renamed the characters to place them within a non-threatening tale.

Or try this: The scene at the Cracks of Doom is the temptation of Christ. The ring is Satan. Frodo is the sin of pride, succumbing to Satan's offer of all the kingdoms of the world. Gollum is the sins of the flesh, who used the ring for murder, theft and catching fish, and finally, in the scene at the Cracks of Doom, it is no accident that Gollum bites off Frodo's finger and then, in his triumph, dances his way backward into the fires of hell. Gluttony destroyed itself and Frodo, as the will to power survived only because he was broken and maimed. Only Samwise, the person who was, significantly, untouched by the power of the ring, emerges unscathed. And so we have an allegorical reading which can be extended quite interestingly throughout the work.

We can search the LORD OF THE RINGS for patterns of imagery; we can decipher the meaning of the different races; we can talk at great length about the bourgeois virtues affirmed by the scouring of the Shire, and argue about whether Sam or Frodo was the figure most rewarded. Yet is any of this what made LORD OF THE RINGS a powerful experience to millions of readers?

Already, however, albeit with the best intentions in the world, LORD OF THE RINGS is being required in college courses and is undergoing just such critical treatments. I do not resent this because there is something inherently bad about critickal reading. On the contrary, there is an excitement to the rituals of criticism. It is an emotional experience to take pieces of the broken-up text and assemble them in a meaningful pattern. It is, in fact, a valid creative act to tell such stories about stories, and I think that is much of the reason why the critic-priests have survived so long. Anyone who has read the rhapsodies of Frank Kermode or the great sagas of Northrop Frye knows that within the community of critic-priests there are powerful, true-seeming tales.

The danger is not in the fashionable critics' tale-telling, but in their insistence that these stories about stories be believed, not as fictions, but as objectively true history. And most critical commentary is as helpful in understanding stories as Genesis is in understanding the origins of life. It is very lovely, but it doesn't account very well for all those fossils. The epickal stories of the critic-priests however exciting they are in their own right, do not even begin to explain what really happens in the experience of participatory reading.

Fantasy cannot be read critickly. It cannot be translated into discourse. Its fit reader cannot remain aloof and detached from the story, searching for meanings in the interstices of the tale. The fit reader of fantasy is not a spectator but a participant. Mythickly or epickly, the fit reader of fantasy attempts to believe, and if he does not believe, it is because he and the writer cannot comfortably dwell in the same unconscious world, not because fantasy itself is by nature unworthy.

THE ACT OF READING

In a sense, all reading is participatory in that it requires the reader to follow along the sentences and apprehend the words. Readers are trained to recognize discrete symbols as letters, and discrete groups of symbols as words. The very fact that words are separated by neat little spaces, and sentences by universally agreed-upon marks, carries its own meaning. But readers do not think about the symbols they are reading while they are reading. They simply receive them, and unconsciously sort them out. Each symbol-group arouses its own set of responses in the reader; but even then, it is not the words we read, but the relationships between the words. Of means nothing by itself. But add more and more words, and of becomes ripe; a reader receives of differently because of its context, and receives everything else in the sentence differently because of is there.

In receiving stories, we go through a similar process. We are told of certain events, with a certain pattern of causal relationships among those events. Each event changes our view of all other events. And, as with reading letters and words, the overwhelming majority of those changes, those relationships among events, are conceived unconsciously, uncontrolledly, and we never notice them at all.

This model of how we receive stories is remarkably similar to how we receive the events of our own lives. Things happen; we act, others act. Each event is unconsciously assigned a causal relationship -- either intentional, mechanical or random -- to all other events. And from all this we develop the unconscious but unquestioningly believed story of the world that makes us who we are. We call this "real life" as opposed to fiction, but in fact our own lives are merely stories we have unconsciously told ourselves about events. Our self exists only in our memory.

But it is more complex than this. We also hear the stories other people tell us about ourselves and about themselves. A child, engrossed in play, performs a socially unacceptable behavior in his pants; his mother, who believes certain tales about such things, says, "That's so filthy", and the child believes. "You are so dumb", and we believe. "You are so beautiful", and we believe. Our very self is constantly being revised according to our experience and the stories others tell us.

This works in the other direction too. We are constantly revising our experiences according to that set of unconscious beliefs we call our "self". We believe some stories, we doubt others; we unconsciously decide some experiences are important and remember them, and decide others are trivial and forget them. Thus ourself edits our experience of the world, and our experience of the world revises ourself in unmeasurable unaccountable ways.

That is how we read, except that the events of the story have already been edited by another person. The author's absolute control over the written text translates into a great deal of control over our ordering of the events in the story. We edit the story unconsciously as we read, deciding what is important and what is trivial, what is true and what is false, but to a considerable degree we will still be influenced by the shapes the writer has imposed on the tale.

Furthermore, the writer's shaping of the work is also unconscious to a greater degree than critical theorists would like to admit. Even writers who follow a tight plan, controlling, as they think, every word, every gesture of a character, every meaning of every line -- even they are still, as human beings, trapped within that set of beliefs that is themself. For their decisions about what is true and important, their selection of events, eventually comes down to what feels important and what feels true.

In this unsortable storm of belief, there is no such thing as publicly verifiable truth, because there is no such thing as perfect communication, and without perfect communication there is verification. The doctrines of the critic-priests are really an attempt to surmount this problem by cutting story down to a more manageable thing: discourse. Detached reading gives the reader the illusion of control -- the illusion that "good" writers are in control of their stories, the illusion that "good" readers can receive the meanings of those works. In fact, however, a detached reading is not a reading of the story at all. The detached reader is not allowing the

writer to give him vicarious memory of events that were ordered by another hand. Instead, the detached reader is continually rebuilding the events and language of the story into his own safe and comfortable discourse, which he knows he can deal with because it is his almost unchanged self.

This method works. But it is, if you will forgive the term, escapist. The detached reader is escaping, not from that set of fictions called reality, but from that most dangerous and fearful of all things, the true story. The closest thing to true communication between two human beings is story-telling, for despite his best efforts at concealment, a writer will inevitable reveal in his story the world he believes he lives in, and the participatory reader will forever after carry around in himself and as himself a memory that was partly controlled by that other human being. Such memories are not neatly sorted into fiction and real life in our minds. I know, of course, that I never stood at the Cracks of Doom and watched Gollum die. But that faith in the distinction between my own actions and the actions of fictional characters is merely another story I tell myself. In fact, my memory of that event is much clearer and more powerful than my memory of my fifth birthday.

You see why the critic-priests must shun participatory reading, must deny it, must refuse it. Participatory reading puts your very self at risk. It will and must change who you are. This may be much of the reason why most people never read stories at all after they leave adolescence. Consciously or not, they do not wish to change, and so they avoid an experience that will unavoidably change them. The critic-priest, with his detached reading, does precisely the same thing. He avoids the experience of reading a story, in exchange for the experience of affirming the story that he is a superior, elevated, fit and above all non-bourgeois reader. It is a story that is not dissimilar to the story of the divine right of kings or the infallibility of popes: It bestows power and privilege, provided that enough other people believe it.

Of course, no one, not even a critic-priest, really reads everything critickly. The emotional impact of believed stories is at the heart of even the most detached of formal criticism. Canonical texts are all right to believe. The bludgeon of detached reading is only used with full force against non-canonical stories -- that is, against those very stories which cannot possibly be comprehended by a critickal reader. It is a catch-22: To be read with belief, a story must be admitted to the canon of great or good works; to be admitted to the canon, a story must be designed for critickal reading or already have such a strong claim to greatness that critickal interpretations have been forced upon it.

In the critic-priest's epick story of stories, fantasy is by definition unworthy of serious attention because it must be believed mythickly to have any value at all. But fantasy is hardly alone in that exclusion. All art that is, in Hulme's term, Romantic, and all fiction that is Romance, belongs outside the courts of the temple. Fantasy is certainly not identical with other sorts of romance, or we would not be able to name the genre and believe the name.

We do not start out believing whatever the writer throws at us in a story. Each genre and subgenre has its own way of inducing us -- or seducing us -- to keep reading long enough to believe. Importance and truth -- that is what we look for in all our reading of stories. When we reject a story we usually do it because it failed in one of those areas because we do not believe it or because we are bored. In coarser terms we either say, "Oh, yeah?" or "So what?"

The writer, because he is telling a story that feels important and true to him, does not ask those questions of himself. But the reader does not, a priori, agree with the writer's assessment of what is important and true. Therefore the writer uses tricks to keep readers paying attention for a while. Eventually the tricks break down, because they are only illusions. Eventually the reader will decide, consciously or not, whether the story itself is true or important. But in the meantime, the tricks can keep working for a long time.

In each genre there are ways of creating the illusion of importance and the illusion of truth. The critic-priests, in fact, provide one of the most powerful machineries for sustaining an illusion of importance. How many people would choose to read Henry James or Virginia Woolf if no one told them that THE AMBASSADORS and TO THE LIGHTHOUSE were pivotal or seminal works? This is not to say that these novels are not really important or true, merely that they depend on the critical story about them for most of their readers. Without that critical buttressing, most readers would give up in despair by the time they reached James's thousandth comma or the second page, whichever comes first.

In the genre of literary stories, the writers openly call for that same critical approval. And to attract it, they create the illusion of importance primarily through imitating the vices of the "great" novels. They make their works deliberately boring, put as much introspection between events as possible, and in short imitate the conventions and forms of their genre to signal to the reader that this is a work which may well meet with approval from the oracle. Also, the literary genre writer often tries for obscurity, forcing the reader to probe for hidden meanings because there is no detectable surface sense. In short, such works seduce the reader into the rituals of critickal reading.

The literary genre also sets up the illusion of truth. In the realistic novel, the writer spins a web

of detail that corresponds with verifiable contemporary experience. The reader recognizes these details and they keep him believing that what is going on here could happen in the real world, that it is true. In the self-conscious novel, the narrative voice is either mocking or mocked, undercutting belief by drawing the reader to an ironic platform from which author and reader together can despise error. This, too, draws the reader into believing the author by accepting his choice of what to disbelieve.

How are the illusions of importance and the illusions of truth created in fantasy? Where the realistic novel depends upon recognition of details of contemporary life, the fantasy writer has long depended on recognition of conventional devices. Because the writer is invoking events that the reader has believed before, the reader is induced to believe again. However, competition with the novel has forced the fantasy writer to use both methods.

The conventions are still there, but a wealth of detail is also provided. The detail in fantasy, however, does not correspond with the contemporary experience. While the causal relationships among events are recognizable, the details create a world that is changed in certain important respects -- the possibility of magic, the distance from the present time. Yet, in the best realistic fashion, the modern fantasy writer gives us so much detail that the story seems to be taking place in a real world. This works only because the realistic novelist has taught readers to believe in detailed realities; but then, it was only necessary in fantasy because the realistic novelist taught readers to expect detail and doubt whatever did not have it.

The illusion of truth, however, is not so important to the fantasy reader as the illusion of importance. The critickal reader, in ridiculing fantasy, usually makes much of the fact that the stories seem so pretentious. The characters and the narrator so often speak in a formal, elevated language -- Ursula LeGuin even considers this essential. The stories always seem to be about a world-changing struggle between good and evil. All of civilization as we know it seems to hang in the balance.

But those elements are not universal in recent fantasy. Most modern fantasy sustains the illusion of importance in other ways. One useful device, perhaps most effective because this is a generally irreligious age, is ritual -- not just for magical purposes, but for purposes that can only be called worship or celebration. The ceremonial honoring of Frodo and Sam before King Aragorn is one such ritual, in which each of them, given a new name and a new story, is presented formally to the people of the land for public honor. One thinks also of the parallel scene in STAR WARS and the honoring of Thomas Covenant as a hero in his own world after his return from the Land.

Another device that sustains the illusion of importance is one that troubles many critics -- the almost inevitable cruelty of fantasy. Violence alone is, indeed, an attention-getting device. But the cruelty of the most powerful fantasies goes beyond mere blood and thunder. In Gene Wolfe's SHADOW OF THE TORTURER, the scenes of death are all ritualized, and pain is a sacrament; in LORD OF THE RINGS, too, Frodo is made holy by his suffering, and his dismemberment becomes part of his name. Stephen Donaldson's leper, Thomas Covenant, lives in a ritual of self-protection, in constant fear of unspeakable, insidious decay. There is something about the ritualizing of suffering that makes it seem more important. In the story of Christ, it matters less that Jesus died than that he chose to die, that his death was important to other people, that it was excruciating and slow, that it followed certain forms and certain words were said. A common form of execution was turned into a holy and important thing because of the way the story of it is given to us. These same elements of ritualized cruelty are no less powerful in fantasy, and so they are frequently invoked.

Behind the illusion of importance however, fantasy really is important to the believing reader. The point of fantasy is not its novelty -- the same conventions can be endlessly repeated because what matters is not the event, but the way the events are fit together and the importance that is given to them by the characters. Losing a finger is unfortunate; Frodo's losing a finger is his personal redemption and the redemption of the world. And yet as soon as I express it in words like that, I have paraphrased and turned it to discourse, and therefore removed its effect. The power of fantasy is not in the fact that a sacrifice has taken place, but that the participatory reader remembers the experience of sacrificing. What makes the Riddlemaster of Hed important is not that there is an identity crisis when God turns out to be the Devil, but that I the reader remember experiencing the terror of that moment, without comfortably naming it "identity crisis". It was myself at risk, myself who suffered. And the very subjectivity of the experience makes it resist the fashionable language of criticism today.

Does this mean that all criticism of fantasy is futile? Of course not. What it means is that we must be aware that the fashionable critical paradigms are completely inappropriate to fantasy -- and to most fiction that real people like to read. The Modernist epick is an assertion of power over all story-telling, and it must be not just doubted but destroyed, and not just destroyed but replaced. It would be foolish to replace it with another map to be laid over stories to "make sense" of them. It is the idea that one must make sense of stories at all that is harmful. Stories are sense, and do not need to have anything made of them at all. Critickal reading of most stories is unintelligent unless it follows a genuine mythick or epick reading: It is time to stop crediting the criticism of those who have not read with belief. It is time to propose new canons of great literature, new methods of critical approach, and new purposes to be accomplished in the examination of a text. The elitists have sneered at good stories without any answering scorn quite long enough.

What sort of criticism is valid? Since every story is, in a way, a revolutionary act, and since stories can be powerful forces for changing individuals, they inevitably have moral force and can be dangerous. Any critic who reads a story that is morally detestable to him has a perfect right to answer the story on those grounds. Since every writer has different strategies for handling the illusions of truth and of importance, it is also appropriate for a critic to call attention to stories offend his personal taste. That is, after all, what I am doing right now. There is always room for critical response to stories, as long as it is understood that such responses are eccentric and we do not allow any one school of thought to have a privileged position -- especially not a school of thought stupid and arrogant enough to consign an exceptionally vital and powerful literature to oblivion.

SMALL PRESS NOTES

BY THE EDITOR

FILE 770, #33
Edited and published by Mike Glyer, 5828 Woodman Av.,#2, Van Nuys, CA 91401. 5 for $1. USA; $1 each to foreign lands by airmail.

News and views of a fan nature; scandals, another commentary on the prospects of gerrymandering SFR and LOCUS out of the Hugo fanzine race or creating a semi-pro category for us and other over-1000 circulation zines. Why, why do they hate me so? I haven't won a Hugo for four years! Of course, I do think LOCUS should be blackballed.

RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY #26, $1.25
Edited and published by Leland Sapiro, Box 1763, Hartsville, SC 29550.

Just when you think Leland has disappeared from fandom forever, out comes an issue of RQ. This is the usual mix of scholarly articles about sf and its writers, columnists, letters, and art. The art is better this issue.

HOLIER THAN THOU #13, $1.50 in USA, equivalent in international postal reply coupons for foreign fans.
Edited and published by Marty Cantor, 5263 Riverton Place, #1, North Hollywood, CA 91601.

A large, old-fashioned faanzine devoted to fans, their views, feelings, with a nod to sf and that boring stuff. Most of this issue is the letter column where the Big-Name Fans gather egoboo off the tree of life. Ha!

BEARDMUTTERINGS #21, Available for 'love, not money.' He trades and likes letters of comment. If desperate, send a scuz bag, used. That's not love, but it does signify strong emotion.
Edited and published by Rich Brown, 1632 19th St., #2, Washington, DC 20009.

Rich asks, in his editorial, "Are Fans Snobs?" This is a ten-page essay-editorial and is mimeographed on yaller twilltone from an electrostencil whose copy had been reduced in size on a photocopier. All this makes for squinting. But the cartoon art throughout is excellent by Dan Steffan.

There is a Ted Johnstone reprint, and a Ted White column on Raleigh E. Multog and STAR*ROCKETS.

If you date back to the 50's in fandom, this is a nostalgia trip. For others, it's faanish history. There will be a test next week to determine your grade.

FANTASY BOOK Aug. '82, $3.00
P.O. Box 4193, Pasadena, CA 91106.
Published by Dennis Mallonee.
Edited by Dennis Mallonee and Nick Smith.

Impressive fiction by Alan Dwan Foster, Diane Duane, Nancy Springer, Katherine Kurtz, Charles, L. Grant, and others, with a 1940 story by L. Ron Hubbard. [Read this early story and then get a copy of his new 839-page novel from St. Martin's due out early October and see if the master of Scientology has improved his fiction style. Trouble is, the new novel, BATTLEFIELD EARTH, is priced as of now at $24. per copy.]

The covers artwork for FANTASY BOOK is fine. But except for the work of Lynne Goodwin and Walter Lee is subtly amateurish inside.

ANSIBLE #26 $2. for 5 issues.
Edited and published by Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, England.

Dave write a chatty, revealing, acidic, funny newszine of the professional and fan goings-on in the U.K. Recommended.

PAPERBACK INFERNO Vol 5, No.6, 15p [or about 30¢ in American coin. Ghod knows how to get a copy without spending at least 30¢ to send 30¢.]
Edited and published by Joseph Nicholas, Room 9, 94 St. George's Sq., Pimlico, London SW1Y 3QY, England.

Personal analysis, review and opinionon sf by leading sf fans, with a lead-off editorial of no-holds-barred opinion by Nicholas.

Nicholas has had American and English fan writers and editors in a froth lately. Try it if you can.

INSIDE JOKE #11, $1.00
Published and presided over by Elaine Wechsler, 418 East Third Avenue, Roselle, NJ 07203

In a real sense, INSIDE JOKE is an apa---an amateur press association. People send her typed/prepared copy of a certain size, to certain specifications, and she has the pages printed, collates them, mails them to the contributors, trades, etc.

Thus everyone who wishes to contribute and pay the printing/mailing expenses can be a fanzine editor, publish a personalzine, whatever, on the cheap. Very attractive.

My only grotch is the print reduction is too extreme for these tired old eyes.

FANTASY NEWSLETTER #50, $2.50
Edited by Robert Collins
Published by the College of Humanities, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431.

The cover is a lot cluttered by listings of features and contributors, but it has a lot inside, including (let's be fair) what seems to be a complete New Books listing from major and minor publishers, sf and fantasy.

Editor Collins got burned to a crisp by Karl Edward Wagner for creatively editing/rewriting parts of Wagner's previous column on fantasy. But Collins did print this column uncut, I presume. I hate to see a grown fan bleed like this. Heh, heh.

KADATH #5 $4.00
Edited by Francesco Corva
Published by Kadath Press, Corso Aurelio Saffi 5/9, 16128 Genova, ITALY.

Color covers, heavy stock, slick book paper...top-notch artwork by Jim Pitts, Allen Koszowski, Stephen Jones...many more.

This issue is dedicated to the Occult Detectives of fantasy and here features five new stories by Ardath Mayhar, Manly Wade Wellman, Brian Mooney, Mike Chinn, and Brian Lumley.

This edition (and likely the only one, ever) is limited to 500 copies. A collector's item as well as inherently worthwhile in itself for the fiction and art.

OTHER VOICES

CELLARS

By John Shirley
Avon, 1982, 295 pp., $2.75

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM GIBSON

Got a little something for you here, friend. Come closer. Yes, it's one of those, the kind of urban horror novel that yearns to burrow into your brain like some sleek biomechanical grub, some parasite out of Giger. Hard to find, these days, for all the promised horror of the Stephen King-clone section of your supermarket rack. But CELLARS, I assure you, is the real thing, the true quill, the genuine article. If this one doesn't do it for you, you are hopeless.

Twisted, perhaps genuinely evil, maybe even dangerous, CELLARS is Shirley's most accomplished work to date.

Taking full -- one might almost say, unfair -- advantage of the average reader's familiarity with the workaday King-clone, Shirley frames his nerve-toxin text in a plot-skeleton worn smooth as an old junkie's con. You slip into it and it's cozy as your down jacket from L.L. Bean, just as familiar, just as American as apple pie; it's SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN, every Fu Manchu book, dime-store Lovecraft ... then you start to notice how the prose is kind of -- well, kinda prehensile, and there are these images, things you know you've actually seen, seen in city streets, but you didn't want to think about them, and ....

This book is as compelling as the art of the insane, but don't assume I mean that Shirley is in any way not in control of his material. There will be times when you'll wish he would lose control and let you off the hook ....

Setting a "conventional" horror story against a realistic backdrop of New York City poverty and degradation is about as easy as making Lovecraft's monsters seem like bad news in a Nazi concentration camp, but Shirley knows that and lets the horror-fantasy breed and writhe just below an appalling surface of real human agony, real greed, real lust. This is a dark book.

> "Farther down the street the air was raucous with the calls of sidewalk vendors, the constant churn of traffic, the periodic hysteria of sirens, the clatter and grind of street construction. Normally, the activity would have pleased him. Today it was an unhealthy swarming, like the scuttling of cockroaches surprised late at night in the kitchen when the light is suddenly turned on. Like something that had crawled up from underground ..."

Step right up, friends. It only wants to have a go at your head.

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CENTAUR AISLE

By Piers Anthony
Ballantine/Del Rey, 1982
294 pp., $2.75

REVIEWED BY PHILIP M. COHEN

Those who have read the first three novels of Anthony's Xanth trilogy (A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON, 1977; THE SOURCE OF MAGIC, 1979; CASTLE ROOGNA, 1979) need only be told that this is more of the same, though not as good. There's a fine map of Xanth this time.

For the benefit of newcomers: These books take place in Xanth, a place where magic works. Xanth has been colonized from Mundania (our world) via connections scattered through history and around the globe; the main quest in this book is to rescue the King of Xanth, lost trying to set up a regular trade route to Mundania. The cover gives you a good idea of the motley collection of amateur adventurers that goes to the rescue. My favorite is the ogre, who's smarter than advertised.

All natives of Xanth are born with an individualized magical power. All immigrants magically learn its common language. We can tell this is English, because the basis of Xanthian magic is not the Law of Similarity of mana, but puns. Mundanian cherry trees bear cherry bombs in Xanth, pineapples become fruity grenades, centipedes grow fivefold into nickelpedes. The punning, more subdued in earlier books, goes wild here from the title onward. I wonder if Anthony's having a learning-disabled child led to the central role of puns and the hero's terrible spelling? But that doesn't account for the tiresome obsession of everything in Xanth -- or so it sometimes seems -- with looking up the heroine's dress. The characteristically Anthonian disposal of the villain is also interesting.

Anthony often works out the engineering consequences of a piece of magic in great detail, but the whole system doesn't bear examination. You must be prepared to suspend disbelief -- by the neck, until dead -- and maturity as well; the ideal audience of this book is probably fourteen-year-olds. If you do, it's fun. I like silliness, and if Anthony is not as good at it as D. Manus Pinkwater, Douglas Adams or Monty Python I still find him enjoyable. Not worth $2.75 this time, though.

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VISCOUS CIRCLE

By Piers Anthony
REVIEWED BY DAVID PITT

VISCOUS CIRCLE is the fifth novel set in Anthony's Cluster Universe. It's about Ronald Snowden, a "grown Solarian male verging on the nether of prime", who's a Transfer Agent. It's his job to have his mind sent into other entities' bodies. In this case he is sent into the body of a Band, a doughnut-like being whose civilization happens to live too close to an Ancient Site. At least, so the humans feel. The Ancients are

millenia-dead beings whose other sites yielded the secrets of Matter Transmission and Transfer, so whoever controls a site controls power.

Earlier agents never came out, so the humans feel the Bands are trying to keep the Site for themselves. Ronald finds the reason: The humans have been sent without retaining their selves. They actually become Bands, and Bands without memories of self. The Bands want no part of the Ancient Site. They are a peaceful society and go to their heaven, the Viscous Circle. The very thought of war causes them to disband. But Ronald, who is now the Band Rondl, gets the crazy idea of defending themselves by force. He gets up an army.

This novel is a fine examination of Ronald/Rondl's dual allegiance -- to the Bands, one of whom he has become for a time, and to the humans, whom he later learns he comes from. The situation is well-devised and shows us our society from an outsider's viewpoint. The Viscous Circle of life-after-death is wonderful; it shows Anthony's marvelous imagination.

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THE DAWNING LIGHT

By Robert Randall; Robert Silverberg and Randall Garrett
Donning Co/Publishers
1981, 176 pages, $4.95

REVIEWED BY W. RITCHIE BENEDICT

THE DAWNING LIGHT is the second volume of a two-part set that was a joint collaboration between Robert Silverberg and Randall Garrett when both were in the beginning of their writing careers.

The first volume told of a planet, Nidor, that had a stagnant tribal agricultural society until stimulated by men from Earth who had a form of religious worship spring up about their orbiting spaceship. In THE SHROUDED PLANET we followed three generations of one native family (humanoid but hairier than humans), and saw the culture take a quantum leap from the tribal stage to early industrial within about 60 years. The "mover and shaker" of this planet, Norvis, forms a political party to rid the planet of both Earthmen and the priesthood that has formed based on the worship of the spaceship in orbit.

As the second volume opens, the society has the attributes of our world, circa 1880. It is also ripe for revolution and the men from Earth are viewed as the local equivalent of George III or Louis XVI. Norvis is not the main character now, although he still plays a prominent role in the events that unfold. His cabin boy, Kris peKym has grown up and becomes a major revolutionary leader almost by accident.

The themes begun in the first book are sustained and developed very well in the second. In its own way, the second book is stronger as a novel, as the first was basically three novelettes tied together. There were plans for yet a third novel taking the culture further into the future, but it was abandoned before completion. Part of it was finished as a novelette. It is a shame it was not included in the present book. At this late date, it is highly unlikely that Silverberg and Garrett will ever get together again on the project.

The Afterword by Silverberg tells how the late John W. Campbell of ANALOG got them to change from the hackneyed "humans deal with alien culture" approach to the viewpoint of the aliens.

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BIRTHRIGHT: THE BOOK OF MAN

By Mike Resnick
Signet, 1982, $2.75.

REVIEWED BY DEAN R. LAMBE

Resnick has done an amazing thing. In a time when publishers often lose their hearing aids for story collections from a single author, Resnick has sold a bunch of story fragments, brief character sketches and narrative episodes, and has called this potpourri a novel. The gimmick, the grabber here, is the span, the scope of the 26 episodes that cover over 20,000 years of human history in the galaxy. Not only is there no central character, there are few real people at all, and the only continuity develops from short introductory excerpts from two encyclopedias of future history -- one pro-human and one pro-extraterrestrial. Beginning with the first practical FTL drive around the year 3000, Resnick traces man's spread throughout our home galaxy with a pseudo-historical overview obviously modeled on at least part of the actual past history of Western Man. I doubt that even Toynbee would approve.

The vast time-span, as well as the stages of organization from Republic through Oligarchy to Anarchy -- the rise and fall, and rise again of human destiny over thousands of other sentient races -- will recall some aspects of Asimov's classic FOUNDATION trilogy. But BIRTHRIGHT, lacking as it is in any memorable person or event, will hardly survive with such popularity. The work might be popular with racists (so long as they misunderstand the final chapters), since "manifest destiny" and "white man's burden" are very much a part of galactic conquest. Certainly, it will please sexists, for herein Man's destiny, with few exceptions, is the work of small-"m" man. The worse of science fiction cliches and misunderstood scientific concepts abound, and Man simply never changes from "the meanest SOB in the valley". Even as black humor, it's entertaining.

****

THE SILVER METAL LOVER

By Tanith Lee
DAW Books, New York, April, 1982
240 pp., $1.95

REVIEWED BY JAMES ANDERSON

True, the plot of THE SILVER METAL LOVER is basically a sex revers-

al of Lester del Rey's "Helen O'Loy". The main character, Jane, is a rather spoiled rich girl who falls in love with a robot -- a perfect man in every way except he is not human. Beset by problems, Jane gives up her rich life of luxury to live with Silver, so named because of his silver skin. As time goes on, both the girl and the robot become more and more human. And when the machine becomes too human, it is recalled by its manufacturers to be destroyed. Thus the lovers are forced to hide from the authorities while trying to make a living in the slums of the city.

If the plot seems well-worn, Tanith Lee makes it seem brand new. She brilliantly contrasts the dark, cold and heartless world of the city where people do not care for one another, with that of the slums where Jane and Silver find the first real happiness of their lives. Only the poor people show any warmth, as they respond to the robot who is programmed to do nothing but care -- unlike the rich inhabitants of the world. Even Jane is a rather cold individual in the beginning of the book; only when she meets Silver and forsakes her wealth does she achieve humanity and learn to love.

For pure emotion and depth of character, Tanith Lee has no equal. She fills the characters with life and makes the reader love and suffer with them. Jane matures before our very eyes as she sacrifices everything to be with her silver lover. Once in the slums she must swallow her pride and make a living by singing in the streets with Silver for the money she needs to survive.

When tragedy strikes, the reader cannot help but be moved. It is evident from the beginning that the match between Silver and Jane cannot last in such a cold and heartless society. The question is, how long can the ill-fated affair go on before the authorities put a stop to it?

Yet even in defeat the characters show their strength, rising above the inhuman people around them. The book ends with hope, not depression.

THE SILVER METAL LOVER is a unique book despite its unoriginal plot. The style is flawless and the writing is refined. Overall, it must be considered a critical success as well as a work of pure enjoyment.

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HEROES AND HOBGOBLINS

By L. Sprague de Camp
Illustrated (color plates) by Tim Kirk
Donald M. Grant, 1981, W. Kingston, RI
Boards, d/w
Signed by poet & illustrator
$25.00

REVIEWED BY STEVE ENG

As most writers know, it is easier to be negative. When you are only inhibitedly Serious, you may hope to be mistaken for "profound". Whereas anything light can be quickly called "superficial" by the gloomy-at-heart. This is especially true of poetry. Critics underrate humorous verse; and they are usually silent on the issue of technique, knowing full well that the light versifier must have considerable skill with rhyme and meter.

De Camp has been writing mostly humorous verses for over twenty years. As we might expect, his more irreverent poems are at the expense of the various genres that his prose takes more seriously. This book draws from such earlier collections as DEMONS AND DINOSAURS (1971) and PHANTOMS AND FANCIES (1972). It is divided into sections and the first is on "places", a good opening for the author of LANDS BEYOND. A typical site is "Tintagel" where we learn the British have Americanized King Arthur country into a tourist trap. With its nostalgia for the "real" kingdom of Arthur -- "The neigh of knightly steeds, the clang of steel, the trumpets, and the sigh of Guinevere" -- it is one of the book's best poems. "Jewels" is a pleasant Nature Poem, comparing the over-gemmed glamor of Teheran with the poet's native Pennsylvania. The section on archaeology has poems on the topics we would expect from the author of THE ANCIENT ENGINEERS (1977). "Ruins" is a flawless and for a change, elegiac poem about a city wracked by war. Unlike some fantasy writers, de Camp has probably seen the places he writes about (this side of Atlantis), such as Mayan ruins and Avebury. We learn for instance that the romantic megaliths of Carnac were actually a "monument to beer" presided over by brewful priests.

The section on natural fauna is a poetic zoo: A Galapagos giant tortoise, dinosauri, two mating salamanders (guess how they do it), amoeba and octopi, etc. (Has de Camp read Hilaire Belloc's BAD CHILD'S BOOK OF BEASTS?) The poet was once chased by a hippopotamus:

> "The buzz and click of cameras then aroused the burly brute;
> It champed its jaws and bounded at us with a thunderous hoot,
> And George and I like rabbits ran, the hippo in pursuit."

There are also tribute verses to genres and to their authors. Edgar Rice Burroughs and his John Carter of Mars get repeated nostalgic nods and "Conan the Limmerian" is the Cimmerian's career in fifteen limericks.

There are some serious poems, reminding us of de Camp's cold-eyed look at Man and his foibles elsewhere (as in the aphorisms in his 1972 SCRIBBLINGS). "Psyche" is exceptionally good, revealing the brute lurking behind the mask of so-called "human" reason; "Warriors" is a delightful evocation of past heroes who are contrasted with desk-bound, Lt. de Camp, U.S.N.R. He expectedly slams modern art and poetry and for all his science background, he extolls the more old-fashioned, dignified personal code for men and women. For instance, he's not afraid to use the word "fuck" in a poem, but he is peeved by those always compelled to use the word. But there is not much windy "philosophy" that older men often feel obliged to give nor those poems of personal bitterness which middle age seems to inspire.

This is an enjoyable gathering of verses. Most of the time the poet avoids the perils of traditional prosody -- the affected jauntiness of a regular beat, the syllable forced to take a wrong stress or the contortions of sound and sense that rhyme can inflict. And the topics are immensely varied in these one-hundred verses; more than many poets, de Camp has the eye for the tangible -- the specific plant, rock, tree, place, god or event.

The volume's binding is rich brown, leather-looking texture, stamped in gold. Type face is sans-serif, not ideal for the fantastic, but adequate considering the tension between archaic subjects and modern sceptical whimsy that characterizes de Camp. Paper is light buff. Such bibliographic information should be embodied in a colphon like Arkham House's; Grant's superb physical standards for books deserve such a notice. Tim Kirk's title page and six full-color illustrations (one of which is also the dust wrapper) are a rich complement to the poems.

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PARTICLE THEORY
By Edward Bryant
Timescape, $2.95

REVIEWED BY LEIGH KENNEDY

I don't doubt that Edward Bryant is one of our best, and do have regrets that he doesn't produce more. PARTICLE THEORY is a collection of his short stories, some of his highest quality, which range over eight years. The personal and impersonal apocalypses of "Particle Theory", which combines cancer and novae, left me with a reverberating fear of the Universe. "Hibakusha Gallery" has always been a favorite of mine -- it is the fascination of a survivor with holocaust. "Hayes and the Heterogyne" (a tale from Cinnabar) has the makings of a classic -- warmth, humor, time travel, biological extrapolation and social issues. "Shark" and "Stone" both would have made terrific movies; we all know that he wrote them long before JAWS or THE ROSE. These stories are strong and memorable.

In Bryant's introduction, "Hans Christian Sauropod", he speaks of his writing process as an accretion, like coral deposits. In his best stories this multi-layered depth gives us stories which are complex and fascinating. Unfortunately, some of his work, which is near-great, suffers from too-rigid an accretion. "Thermals of August" centers around a woman that I believe Bryant was trying to strip any sexual stereotyping from; she

emerges as a controlled, generic sort. The story is so well-written that I cannot exactly say why it left me untouched. "Teeth Marks" and "giANTS" were also well-written but without the heart of the above-mentioned stories. "Strata" dealt with geologic time travel, had wonderful characters, but was ultimately disappointing. "Precession" faded away, which may have been intentional, being a story of entropy, but the effect didn't work. "To See" and "Winslow Crater" were intellectual fluff. The book is definitely worth reading -- in fact, having and re-reading, if I may urge you to buy it. Even the most mediocre Bryant story is comparatively un-mediocre.

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A STORM OF WINGS
By M. John Harrison
Timescape/Pocket, 189 pp., $2.50

REVIEWED BY PAUL MC GUIRE

In Mr. Harrison's 1971 novel, THE PASTEL CITY, his brooding hero has a dream: "In the soft black space of his head a giant insect hovered and hummed, staring gloomily at him from human eyes, brushing the walls of his skull with its swift wings and unbearable, fragile legs. He did not question its philosophy. The ideographs engraved on its thorax expressed a message of Time and the universe, which he learned by heart and immediately forgot." In the next chapter a legend was casually mentioned in parenthesis: "... no one knew if Paucemanly had actually attempted the Moon-trip in his legendary boat Heavy Star..." Within ten years, those two quotes have grown into the novel's sequel.

In addition to warriors and wanderers, sword and sorcery almost exclusively deals with the upper and lower classes. Working and middle class folk just don't seem to interest fantasists. (They're harder to fit into this type of fiction for several reasons, so who needs them?) With this in mind, a perfect hero would be an upper class warrior who for some reason or perversity lives among and like the lower class. That describes Galen Hornwrack.

At the end of THE PASTEL CITY about a thousand people dead per millennium were resurrected. The Reborn Men (and women) live in a mixture of past, present and the imaginary. With difficulty, Alstath Fulthor can separate them; Fay Glass cannot.

Returning from THE PASTEL CITY, the events of which occurred eighty years before, are Queen Methvet Niam, Tomb and the enigamatic and immortal Cellur. Returning from the moon is Benedict Paucemanly.

THE PASTEL CITY was about slightly over-the-hill heroes: Realistic and realists, cynical, disillusioned, sometimes cruel, always courageous, and possessed by a sense of loyalty and honor. They were complex and fascinating. In A STORM OF WINGS the characters are small-minded and selfish, defeatist or more than half insane. In this unpleasant company, Tomb, the brutal dwarf who likes killing, comes across as comedy relief.

In the first tale of Vericonium Mr. Harrison used metaphor and flowing description in a remarkable series of images which read like an epic prose poem. In this, the second tale, he does all that and more. In fact, he lays it on with a shovel. More is less in this padded work (and he uses parentheses so much it goes beyond mannerism to affectation). No matter how flowery it got, THE PASTEL CITY seemed natural and was smooth. A STORM OF WINGS is self-conscious. For example:

> 'Cellur. Ten thousand seasons once were his, years beating like hearts! Their geometries could tell us. They are the spoor of Time itself, did we but know. Cellur the Bird Lord! Now he speaks --
>
> 'All are assembled in the throne room but Alstath Fulthor.'

Then follows a fifty-nine-word sentence (in paranthesis) about Fulthor's madness-eroded features and heaving lungs as his past pursues him.

THE PASTEL CITY was fast moving. Two wars were fought in 157 pages. A STORM OF WINGS is half finished before the adventure even gets started.

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THE MAKING OF RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK
By Derek Taylor
Non-fiction, Ballentine Books,
New York, NY, 182 pp., $2.75, illus.

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

Here is The book all you RAIDERS fans have been eagerly panting for. Derek Taylor does a neat job of interviewing all of the principals of this popular epic serial (if Lucas and Spielberg have their way), and giving fascinating glimpses of the professional workmanship and craft that goes into the special effects, make-up, realistic props, dangerous stunts and of course, the acting. Be the first on your block to get the lowdown on the snakes in the Well of Souls, or Harrison Ford's own death-defying feats. Learn how to make your own mummy and see why a staged fist-fight looks more realistic on the screen than the real, unrehearsed thing.

After reading this book, you will have an excellent insight into the hard work that acting really is all about. Recommended.

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BARD

By Keith Taylor
Ace Books, 293 pp., $2.50, 05000 x
Cover Art by Don Maitz

REVIEWED BY PAUL MC GUIRE

For fans such as myself who still lament the loss of Ted White's FANTASTIC, all I need say is that Keith Taylor is Dennis More (the latter being the pseudonym) and the bard is Felimid mac Fel. I will let the Erin rover introduce himself to the rest of you:

> '"I'm a bard, and that is only a lesser degree of Druid. You had them here once. Where I come from, bards have been known to sing armies to defeat or victory and kings off their thrones or onto them. My grandfather Fergus is Chief Bard of Erin. We're descended from Cairbre, the bard of the Tuatha de Danann. My line have been poets and harpers in Erin since the world was new, and magic's in our heart-marrow."'

BARD is one short novel and four long stories which together form a continuous narrative. The bard is a man who can work magic with his harp and wreak havoc with his sword. And yet his greatest weapon is his wits. His world is post-Roman Britain (about 497 AD). If one grants the magic and wonders, it seems a realistic depiction of that barbaric people and savage land.

Mr. Taylor's prose is convincing even when he writes of giant spiders, half-human and half-goblin "hounds", a variety of wizards, a talking horse which can ride between worlds -- and all this appears in only the first third of the novel.

The second third is a 95-page tale. While narrowly escaping with his life the hospitality of a Jutish king, Felmid throws in his lot with a clever and courageous Briton woman named Regan. The two of them at the start of this tale finally reach a Briton city, but not safety. When Felmid's ancient sword is stolen, he leaves Regan to pursue the thieves with the help of a witch's familiar. It's a cursed trail and schemes as well as swordplay are needed.

Felmid journeys to the halls of the sea-wolf Lord Cerdic in Westri, hoping for passage to Erin, but becomes involved with a dwarf, a fearsome past enemy and a mysterious witch-woman.

Finally, the bard becomes involved with Huns, a werewolf, warriors of Count Artorius (called King Arthur in updated legends of a later age) and lost Roman treasure.

For lovers of magic, history and/or swashbuckling adventure, here is an excellent novel about an earthy and genuinely likeable Irish hero.

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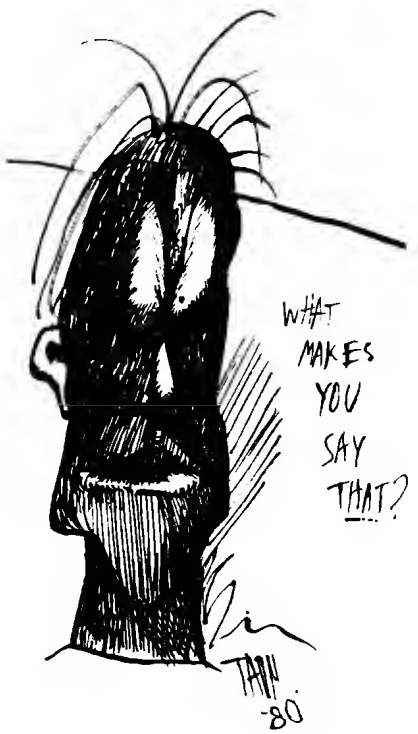

CLAN OF DEATH: NINJA
By Al Weiss and Tom Philbin
Pocket, Non-fiction, NY, $2.50

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

Messrs. Weiss and Philbin are respected martial artists and authors and have done an excellent job of showing that truth may be stranger than fiction, especially if it comes from the Orient! The history and techniques of the ninja are graphically explored; how this group of subtle Japanese assassins came into being; tricks of the trade; and modern-day ninja.

Japanese authors and film makers have explored and exploited the world of ninja in much the same manner as our Western history does for the last frontier and the cowboy.

Through good P.R. men, the ninja was eventually looked upon as the original Superman, full of fascinating mental and physical prowess. Japanese Momma-Sans used the ninja as bogeymen, to silence recalcitrant children.

The literature and films depicting ninja are just arriving in the West. This book will explain what is real and which is fantasy. Highly recommended.

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WEB OF THE SPIDER

By Andrew Offutt and Richard Lyon
Timescape/Pocket Books, 268 pp.
plus 24 pp. Glossary and Gazetter
$2.95

REVIEWED BY PAUL MC GUIRE

Volume three of the WAR OF THE WIZARDS trilogy is a complete novel which can be read, understood and enjoyed by persons who have not read the first two. Its hero is a voluptuous pirate captain named Tirana Highrider, who is almost as clever and courageous as she thinks she is. The novel opens with her a prisoner facing torturous execution. In hair-raising fashion, she escapes to a subterranean grotto where she finds an arcane treasure which involves her in a conflict with the most ancient, powerful and evil being in her world. This is all part of a plot to destroy her wizard ally, Pyre. But Pyre has an unwilling ally, a "faceless" gray knight who can't remember who he is. Sea battles, magic, dragons and so on follow in an eerie and exciting adventure. Excellent writing (Tiana's black foster-father's battle with the Moonstalkers is marvelous) and welcome and refreshing humor lift this novel far above the usual by-the-numbers sword and sorcery.

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LAUGHING SPACE

By Isaac Asimov & J.O. Jeppson
Houghton/Mifflin, 1982
521 pages, $17.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW M. ANDREWS

Nearly every science fiction writer gets struck with a terribly devastating disease known as the "original anthology affliction", inflamed with the crippling desire to make some easy dollars without a whole lot of creative anguish.

But it disturbs me when most of the anthologies turned out these days don't even have original material. In fact, if LAUGHING SPACE is any example, most stories are reprints, some for the tenth time.

But this one is rewarding enough if you like to re-read stories you first read in your favorite science fiction or fantasy magazine and re-read a short time after.

But the feelings are mixed toward the latest, LAUGHING SPACE. It's rife with Asimov wit and joviality (did you know "Isaac" is Hebrew for laughter?) and Jeppson gaiety. But it's all so juvenile, so preppy and light. It contains plenty of cartoons (by Fisher, Nick, Arno, Ross and others) not to mention fiction by Sturgeon, Bester, Knight, Jeppson and Asimov themselves, and a potpourri of poems and other things.

It's like scrambled eggs and ham: it becomes expensive, salty, crusty and unpalatable to those well-accustomed to science fiction. Maybe it is meaty enough for a neofan.

I suppose the book could be excused for Asimov's witty introductions and the always amusing cartoons.

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IS NOTHING SACRED?

By Gahan Wilson
St. Martin's/Marek, 1982
128 pages, $5.95

REVIEWED BY ANDREW M. ANDREWS

As a rampart against the quirks of big cities, overpopulation, the rampart mediocritization of individuality, and as sheer satire against a mechanized world, cartoonist Gahan Wilson offers us a melange of little people, fat people and plenty of plain weird things in this collection of cartoons.

The cartoons in IS NOTHING SACRED have been dragged from the musty, already forgotten pages of such magazines as FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, THE NEW YORKER, PLAYBOY and as such

they are a fiesta of the grotesque and hilarious.

They are artful, acid commentaries on the idiocies (and idiosyncrasies) of life: from hum-drum rural towns to massive, impersonal cities.

I can tell Wilson likes to throw wrenches everywhere at our media-bolstered lifestyles; but he does so with grace and gaiety.

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SHADOWS OF SANCTUARY
Edited by Robert Asprin
Ace Science Fiction, 338 pp, $2.50

REVIEWED BY ALMA JO WILLIAMS

O.K., habitues of The Vulgar Unicorn, Volume III of the Sanctuary Series is here! Rowena Morrill's third cover for the THIEVES WORLD anthology shows the sleazy tavern with its food-carpeted floor and its deadly inhabitants waiting to welcome the unwary reader into Sanctuary, anus of the Ranke Empire. The stories are in the same vein as the first two books: raunchy, disgusting, thoroughly readable and engrossing.

Behold, Tempus, the Immortal Hellhound, is finally rescued from the Kurdish vivisectionist by Shadowspawn, the Pickpocket. Watch Enas Yorl, the involuntary shape-changing magician, give the gift of soul-seeing to a failed artist -- with unforseen results. See Cime, Tempus' hell-raising sister, seduce and slay Sanctuary's sorcerors.

All these and many more forbidden delights await the unwary between the paper-thin covers of this magnificent bargain. (There are maps in it too!) Conan, Thongor, King Kull and the rest of the heroic fantasy heroes pale before the exploits, the trials and tribulations of the Thieves World inhabitants. Those musclebound superheroes probably wouldn't make it alive out of The Vulgar Unicorn, if they even got that far into Sanctuary. Robert E. Howard, move over. Thieves World rides again! Recommended for strong-stomached readers only. Others need not apply.

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EASY TRAVEL TO OTHER PLANETS

By Ted Mooney
Farrar-Straus-Giroux, NY, 1981
278 pp., $11.95

REVIEWED BY SUE BECKMAN

What a book! I loved it; I hated it. It was like nothing else I have read before. That alone serves as a kind of recommendation, but this book is definitely not for everyone.

The story, set vaguely in the near future and covering about two weeks, is rather simple and in summary will sound soap opera-ish. Melissa is a 29-year-old marine biologist. She lives with and loves Jeffrey, a school teacher. She also lives with and loves Peter, a dolphin. Melissa is involved in a project to teach Peter the art (the folly?) of human speech. She shuttles between her aquatic habitat in the Virgin Islands and her dryland apartment in New York. Jeffrey is jealous of Melissa's emotional and sexual involvement with the dolphin. The dolphin won't eat when Melissa is away. Melissa's mother is dying of lung cancer and needs her daughter's support. Melissa's best friend, Nicola, is pregnant (again) and fears the wrath of her violent Barcelonan lover. Everybody needs Melissa. Conflicts abound. Also stress, strife, fear, passion and more passion. People discard old lovers, take new ones, travel a lot on airplanes, meet for lunch at expensive restaurants and order things like bluefish salad and Moules Marinieres.

But the story also includes things you won't see on daytime TV. Some of New York's inhabitants suffer from information sickness. The victims of this biological future shock suddenly begin to bleed and babble on city sidewalks. There's a special ward for them at the hospital. There's also a special memory-elimination posture one can as-

sume after a hard day absorbing information. The author's approach to this negentropy theme is low-keyed but compelling -- like a muffled scream. The narrative contains many seemingly irrelevant statements like "In the air, there were jet planes, helicopters, invisible particles" (p. 14). Mooney's sophisticated characters may, for their own peace of mind, wish to ignore the world on the molecular level, to forget the foul-smelling corruption of Nona's cancerous lungs, to take no notice of the pollution and death that result from human carelessness. But can they ignore any of it? Do they have a choice? They unwittingly suck in information like they absorb vitamin D on a sunny day.

They are victims swept along in a rip current of headlines, radiation therapy, birth control, particle physics, scents, sounds, lights, speed, past, present, future. And most of the human characters are weak swimmers. Their unconscious response to this sensory overload is an unhealthy dose of Death Wish: Melissa continues to smoke, Nicole steps out of a speeding car, and so on. They are powerless. They speculate on the growing threat of nuclear war with the same emotion one would invest in, "Think it'll rain?" The only control they exercise is over their sex lives. Jeffrey, in a burst of insight, remarks that "... desire might be compounded of fear -- fear, at bottom, of being so thoroughly at the testy mercy of disorderly events" (p. 215). The characters emerge as actors, or more precisely, reactors. The " stage" is the real star, and its performance is flawless.

Mooney's style is extraordinary. Point of view shifts frequently and without warning. Seemingly unrelated events share space within a paragraph: On page 11, Melissa is playing catch with Peter. She drops the ball into his mouth, and in the next sentence, her mother, in far-away New York, drops a cup of coffee. Sometimes, as in this example, there seems to be a spiritual connection, but most often these unexpected asides are linked only by their simultaneity. Mooney further complicates things by tossing in a lot of unexplained jargon and bizarre behavior: In the back of the car on the way from the airport, the girls "...have both assumed full Mobius position, also known as single-surface posture, also known as second return posture ... They are practicing Klein bottle-breathing as well" (p. 177). Mooney is having fun while the reader struggles along -- not a relaxing read, but worth the effort. Much of Mooney's phrasing is absolutely iridescent, and he gives some wonderful glimpses of the world from a dolphin's perspective (it's obvious which species Mooney prefers). The author has tried in this first novel to be shocking, irritating, awing, memorable -- and he's succeeded.

A caveat: If you're thinking of sending a copy to your aunt who has a penchant for dolphins, think twice. The story is far from pornographic, but it's way past what your aunt would call racy.

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THEY'D RATHER BE RIGHT

By Mark Clifton and Frank Riley
Illustrated by M.W. Carroll
Donning Press, Starblaze Edition.
173 pages, $4.95.
Original Copyright ASTOUNDING Science Fiction, 1956.
Reprinted 1981.

REVIEWED BY PATRICIA SHAW

How would you like to be made young again? Young, in perfect health, with your mind -- reason and intuition both -- as keen as your senses and as flexible as your body? But in order to do so, you would have to give up all preconceived ideas and moral imperatives that could not be constructed from provable facts. Most people would rather be right -- and die.

This is the theme of this Campbell-era classic, now reprinted in a slick-covered trade edition. It is the story of Bossy, the computer that began as an intelligent weapons-guidance system and Joe, the student who unaccountably knows his way around Skid Row and is a telepath, and Professors Hoskins and Billings, valiantly fighting a climate of intellectual repression.

As the story opens, all four of them are on the run from a Federal indictment and a lynch mob. The Feds think Bossy is a weapon; the mob has somehow been convinced that Bossy can tell right from wrong and is equipped to make value judgments -- and is a threat to established morality. Both groups are quite right.

Established morality, in this case, is the rigid Dick & Jane pattern of existence, a quasi-military dictatorship behind a facade of democracy, a blind terror of ideas on the part of the average citizen and the values of what we now call the Moral Majority; not hysterical and defensive as it is today, but so firmly in the saddle that only a few self-conscious rebels can fearfully or covertly question it. It is, in short, 1956 and whenever young nostalgics ask anybody over forty what was wrong with such a happy, innocent time, this is the book to hand them.

Among these rebels is industrialist Howard Kennedy, who has the same noble dream as Asimov's Hari Seldon, and as part of that dream, offers sanctuary to Hoskins, Billings, Joe and Bossy. But because Bossy can only rejuvenate those flexible in mind enough to offer no resistance to the process, the old prostitute can be rejuvenated, but the professor cannot; the derelict, but not the industrialist. And Middle America, feeling justly cheated, explodes, in a climax that ends in a lawsuit and an attempted Federal takeover.

But Bossy is a machine and a machine will work if you use it properly and this, too, is an article of American faith; the inventors come to a conclusion Heinlein came to in an earlier story, and the same solution.

The book is flawed. The very authors who turned the book into a long plea to give up unpreconceived value judgments, or die, have filled the book with them: Hysterical tirades against respectable people, established morality, female opinions and Middle America in general. It is the cry of a pair of intelligent and sensitive youths against their oppressors, without the slightest attempt to understand the oppressors, or imagine that the people they so condemned were oppressed in their turn. The authors would never have been rejuvenated by Bossy; like the people they decry, they too, would rather be right.

But it's a powerful and exciting book, a good read and it makes an important statement about living in repressive times.

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SATYR

By Linda Crockett Gray
Playboy, 224 pp., $2.50, 1981

REVIEWED BY JOHN DIPRETE

SATYR is a fast-moving, eerie tale of rape and horror. A modern-day incubus stalks, prowls and attacks. Women fall prey to the goat beast's satanic powers. Rape Crisis Center supervisor Dr. Martha Boozer battles the havoc and panic of a city terrorized by supernatural goings-on.

The book has a drawback -- in the form of grandstanding. At a women's gathering, the participants condemn pornography in overly-moralistic fashion. Certainly the author has the right to inject a political and/or social statement; the points raised (which denigrate pornography as women-hating filth) are perhaps cogent, but the shrieking militarism short-changes the book's purpose -- which is, quite simply, violent suspense. (Neither does the half-dressed woman on the cover help.)

The main character is a crusader type -- with a tough-talking, one-track mind. A turn-off.

Despite this, the rest of Gray's fantasy offers a highly readable -- though at times gloomy and unfair -- portrait of city life and its denizens (carrion?) found there in the seams, lurking...

A pretty good horror-thriller of sex, myth, nightmares, death and darkness.

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HECATE'S CAULDRON

Edited by Susan M. Shwartz
DAW, 1982, 256 pp., $2.95

REVIEWED BY PATRICIA SHAW

HECATE'S CAULDRON is an anthology about witches and witchcraft: serious witches, benevolent witches, vindictive witches, magicians, priestesses, espers, those in touch with the Old Gods and the very Queen Mother of the Old Gods, Hecate Herself, Queen of Old Age, Death and Wisdom.

Gods and witches dearly love a riddle, and the stories are full of classic riddles to exercise the reader's mind. Like magic itself, these stories span time and culture so that a coven can persuade a nuclear power plant to take certain precautions while the Russian witch Baba Yaga can try to sell a clumsy juggler the feet of John Travolta, Fred Astaire and Muhammed Ali because "they had soul".

These thirteen tales -- thirteen was a lucky number and sacred in the Old Religion -- begin with a fascinating introduction by the editor who seems not only to know but to love her subject; and then begins by moving from Baba Yaga in space, to Tanith Lee's quasi-Chinese city terrorized by a great magician of unknown motives, to C.J. Cherryh's war-weary knight saved from a career of brutality by She Who Protects Her Daughters, and then to an Andre Norton story set on another world in another time, of psi powers and old gods and a woman with talent in hiding.

"The Sage of Theare" by Diana Wynne Jones, makes a point about order, freedom and self-fulfilling prophecies; Jayge Carr's "Reunion" sends Orpheus into Hades again, but this time Eurydice has been chosen for Persephone's role. "Act of Faith" by Galad Elflandsson, sets a gentle healer, a priestess of Freya, against a Christian zealot in tenth-century Norway, while Katherine Kurtz takes us to her alternate world of the Deryni for a tale less of witchcraft than of witch-hunting. "Witch Fulfillment" by Jean Lorrah is a hilarious sendup of popular romances, and presumably of those who read them; read it for the pastiche, and laugh. "Science is Magic Spelled Backward" mixes a nuclear power plant, an ambitious young rationalist engineer who finds her mother a dingbat, if still lovable, a witch out of the "Jewish-mother" stereotype bag, all stirred by Jacqueline Lichtenberg via an earthquake into the same point Jane Fonda once made. Lichtenberg and Lorrah are friends and have collaborated on a book; they seem to use the same needle on pop culture, and does it hurt!

Charles Saunders has another well-crafted tale of African magic and customs in "Ishigbi", a tale of twins destined to be witches, one of whom accepted fate and one of whom rejected it, and of their final meeting. Saunders is always worth looking for in an anthology of magic.

So is Diana Paxson, whose next-to-last tale, "The Riddle of Hekaite" could stand as a companion piece to either of the early Mary Renault books and is as beautiful. The proud, aging Queen who fights her destiny and meets the Goddess; and her husband who must be hauled back from the hero's death that seems his best and only choice, for he, too is growing old, are people one remembers long after the book is closed.

There is also a tale of Japanese magic in which a woman warrior must fight and come to terms with the fact that she has lost a limb.

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FORERUNNER

By Andre Norton
Pinnacle Books, Inc.
1430 Broadway, New York, NY 10018
Paper, 282 pages, $2.50

REVIEWED BY KENDRA USACK

Andre Norton has once again proved herself as the grand-dam of science fiction.

As she does in many of her works, Andre Norton introduces us to a strong, female protagonist. In this case, her name is Simsa. She is a burrower. Burrowers are the lowest class of people in her society. They are scorned by the dregs of society as well as the upper classes. She is also outcast from the burrowers. Simsa was under the protection of Ferwar (The Old One), who had trained her to tell the difference between the rubbish and the true treasures of Kuxortal (her society), a city which has rebuilt itself many times. With these treasures, Simsa hopes to make her fortune. She goes to the spaceport to sell them, and meets a starman. He is excited over the artifacts because he believes they will lead him to his brother, who disappeared a few years ago.

Simsa and the starman are forced to leave Kuxortal because a lord is disturbed by the starman's questions and wants to capture him. The lord also wants to destroy any people that help him.

With Simsa and her animal companions in tow, he goes through a series of adventures and discoveries -- they cross a desert, find a mysterious pool which heals the body and soul and they find the ruins where Simsa rediscovers her mysterious ancestor.

This book is strongly based on Andre Norton's complex mythologies -- those of the Forerunners, who preceded all other societies in her known universe and the mystic knowledge of the Earth-Mother Goddess whose powers are contained within the organic part of the universe.

She also bases this book on a solid understanding of archaeology and the people, who pursue archaeology for its intrinsic value.

However, be forewarned, this book is <u>not</u> the definitive work of the Forerunner series. It adds new mysteries, as well as solves some old ones.

If this is your first experience with Norton's novels, you will enjoy her mythology and carefully woven plots. If you are a long-time fan, settle down with this book and enjoy.

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MALLWORLD

By Somtow Sucharitkul
Donning/Starblaze trade paperback
194 pp., $4.95

REVIEWED BY PAUL MC GUIRE

There are seven stories in this collection, united by all taking place on the Mallworld. Humanity has been confined to their solar system by a force field. In "A Day in Mallworld", a young girl from the Bible Belt runs away to the colony of over 20,000 shops to pursue the impossible dream of reaching the lost stars. "Sing a Song of Mallworld" concerns both the society of the young rich (reminiscent of Tanith Lee's gang in DON'T BITE THE SUN) and fugitive children who live like mice behind the walls. When a holovision personality learns that the son of the richest man in the solar system has had himself turned into "The Vampire of Mallworld", he sets out to learn why and cure him. In "Rabid in Mallworld", a working-class woman discovers a shocking secret about the all-powerful alien Selespridar. In "Mallworld Graffiti", a hopeless addict finds himself when he literally meets himself. The protagonist of "The Darker Side of Mallworld" is a female who works as a bogyman to scare people into keeping up mortgage payments on their children. Finally, a surfer vs. "The Jaws of Mallworld". Yes, it is a shark, and of course, the fate of the world depends on the outcome.

A well-conceived future-point-of-view combines with wild mistakes and confusion about "the past" (always stated with absolute certainty), throw-away phrases, and bits of description to build a remarkable image of this world. Mr. Sucharitkul has fine senses of wonder and metaphor, humor and humanity. The book contains the original pulp paperback illustrations and a few new drawings. The book also includes Mallworld commercials. My favorite is for The Cult of the Month Club. MALLWORLD succeeds and entertains on several levels but I hope someone proofreads it before the next printing.

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DARK FORCES

Edited by Kirby McCauley
Bantom Books, 538 pp., $3.50

REVIEWED BY ROBERT SABELLA

Along with the recent surge in popularity of fantasy has come a parallel resurgence of supernatural horror stories. This genre satisfies the same basic premise of science fiction and fantasy: the readers willingly suspend their disbelief for one outrageous idea, but the rest of the story must follow logically from that central idea. After this premise, however, SF and SH take divergent paths. Where SF appeals mostly to the intellect and sense of wonder, SH is concerned with mood-setting and the arousal of various shades of fear. These shades range from vague unease (remember Fritz Leiber's OUR LADY OF DARKNESS?) to pure terror (DRACULA, et al).

DARK FORCES amply demonstrates what is probably SH's biggest weakness: since the authors are usually pre-occupied with arousing emotions they often violate many other rules of good story telling. This results in stories totally dependent for their success on the successful manipulation of the readers' emotions. The problem is: how many last-minute frights can work before the readers get bored with the repetition of cardboard characters and unanswered questions?

This criticism is not meant as a condemnation of the whole of DARK FORCES but a reflection on the sameness of many stories. There are several which rise above the overall mediocrity. Stephen King's 40,000-word novel, THE MIST, is an outstanding thriller. There was nothing subtle in its premise of old-fashioned monsters lurking in a blinding mist, but King is a fine writer who can make the hoariest cliches work. He understands that the primary concern of SH should be the characters' reaction to the horror. If the readers can relate with the characters then their breath will rise or fall with every unnatural creak that threatens them. King also writes a full-fledged story and not merely a series of incidents leading up to the traditional "one last scream for the road!"

Ray Bradbury's "A Touch of Petulance" had no monsters and was more pure fantasy than SH. However, it was quite unsettling and genuinely thought-provoking, a welcome rarity in SH.

Other good stories included Gahan Wilson's diabolical "Traps", about a squeamish exterminator who is beginning to suspect that the rats are gaining the upper hand; Matheson pere et fils' "Where There's A Will" about a man buried alive who is trying his dammedest to escape from his coffin; Joe Haldeman's "Lindsay and the Red City Blues", Manley Wade Wellman's "Owls Hoot in the Daytime" and Joyce Carol Oates' "The Bingo Master" were all primarily about people in supernatural settings rather than settings which only incidentally included characters.

The other stories ranged from disappointments to outright failures. Rather than discuss them all I'll use T.E.D. Klein's "Children of the Kingdom" to illustrate their failings. Much of this 66-page story was fascinating. It had a believable main character as well as a promising plotline. An old man recovering from a heart attack was placed in a boarding home by his son who feared he was unable to care for himself. At the boarding house the son met a colorful cast of supporting characters and heard a fascinating old legend about Earth's original race which arose in Latin America before being driven out by invaders millennia ago. Perhaps my mistake was in expecting something good to come out of all this development. Alas, after 66 pages all I got for my efforts was a brief glance at some ancient monsters, a quick chill up my spine and good-bye to both ancient legends and hoary characters without a single sentence of explanation. This was a textbook example of the entire story being aborted by the author's quest for that "one last scream for the road!" It is the same flaw which afflicts nearly half of the 23 stories in this volume.

One last thought: not a single story in DARK FORCES featured an old mansion haunted by the reminders of its evil past. Instead there is an excess of crime-infested ghettos where danger lurks in the form of rapists and muggers. Frightening? Sure, but it seems like much of the glamour of SH has been stripped away and replaced by "Starsky and Hutch" with screams. Where's the sense of wonder in that?

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A CHOICE OF GODS

By Clifford D. Simak
Del Rey, 201 pp., $2.50

REVIEWED BY JOHN DIPRETE

It's been frequently observed that earning Nebulas and Hugos can ignite or re-spark a professional writer's career. It's certainly no coincidence that, ever since Simak's Grand Master Award in 1977, his novels (both new and reprint) have come

like a flood. The current three have been released from Del Rey, all stamped with a familiar Simak blueprint: robots, the rural future and religion.

All share similar cover art: PROJECT POPE (an '81 reprint) has robots trimming a rose bush on its cover; SPECIAL DELIVERANCE (a new hardcover) has a robot pouring coffee; A CHOICE OF GODS (a '72 reprint) has a robot on a Brillhart cover -- head bowed, praying.

Religiosity and/or robots have appeared in several Simak tales, such as WHY CALL THEM BACK FROM HEAVEN, RING AROUND THE SUN, CITY, among other works. The basic theme reemerges in Del Rey's resurrection of A CHOICE OF GODS, the story of Earth's lingering, robot-centered spiritual longing -- in a future where many have left for the stars.

A by-now familiar Simak ingredient, the rich, pastoral setting comprises the novel's central character, amidst a quiet backdrop of loneliness, wistfulness and the search for meaning.

It's a good book for the regular Simak reader. For the few still not exposed, it's a fine introduction to the writer's style.

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FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

By J. Eric Holmes, M.D.
Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1981
Hardcover, 224 pp., $14.95

REVIEWED BY ALLEN VARNEY

Fandom as a whole apparently has not decided about Dungeons & Dragons. Players often come from outside the subculture, but they keep out of the way at conventions and are on the whole less obnoxious than, say, Trekkies. And now D&D is bigger than Monopoly and hordes of imitators crowd the gaming market. If you're a Secret Master of Fandom and think it's about time to rule on the intruders, FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES may help you set policy.

John Eric Holmes may already be known to you for his novels MORDRED (Ace) and MAHARS OF PELLUCIDAR (DAW). He also wrote the revised "Basic Set" booklet for D&D and so it's no surprise that this survey of the major role-playing games (or RPGs) leans heavily in favor of the "original". Holmes also discusses other games of adventure, including Traveller (SF), Runequest, Tunnels and Trolls, and Empire of the Petal Throne (all fantasy), Boot Hill, Gangster!, Superhero 2044 and others. There are introductory chapters which address the complete novice, doing a good job of describing these unorthodox amusements and imbuing them with more dignity than you might expect. Holmes even provides an introductory RPG and dungeon, as well as discussions of such accessories as miniature lead figurines, hobby magazines and computer adventures.

As it stands the book is an okay introduction for beginners, and for bewildered parents of devoted adventurers. Especially useful for the former is the last chapter, "How to Get Started" and the latter will be comforted by Holmes' discussion "Are They All Crazy?"

But this monograph is weakened by the author's D&D bias. The game may be the biggest on the market, but his bland assertion that it's "the best" is highly debatable. His descriptions of D&D's virtues should be taken with a grain of salt the size of a 20-sided die. Reviews of the other games are mainly pretty shallow beyond the most basic listing of their parameters. The same bias shows in the chapter on magazines. About the miniatures I must plead ignorance, though the chapter certainly seems a good introduction for those with a lead fetish. The "Chapter" (five pages) on computers is basically a waste.

The book's other big weakness is hardly Holmes' fault: The field is currently expanding too fast for any book to attempt to cover all major systems. This volume has a 1981 copyright and in some respects it's already badly dated. Several important RPGs (The Fantasy Trip, Dragonquest, Space Opera, Aftermath, Champions) have emerged since it was written. Any book on this subject is almost perforce behind the times -- at least until the field settles down.

FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES is a respectable effort. But almost any later book of comparable scope is bound to be an improvement in important ways. The SMOFs are better off waiting awhile.

This RPG I'm working on now allows the players to assume the roles of famous science fiction writers, fighting heroically for ever-larger advances, movie deals and awards, all the while struggling against greedy agents, fans and (of course) other writers. It's called HUGOES AND HARLANS, see, and ....

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HONEYMOON IN HELL

By Fredric Brown
Bantam, 1982 (reprint collection)
150 pp., $2.25

REVIEWED BY JOHN DIPRETE

Well-known since the 50s for his novel-length satires (notably, WHAT MAD UNIVERSE and MARTIANS, GO HOME), Brown was also adept at shorter lengths -- perhaps the maddest technician of short shorts ever known. This collection contains a number of one/two page quickies, the vast majority ingeniously funny. A few brief clinkers, of course, can't be helped (Sentry" is a cliche' so horribly stilted it's a wonder even a 50s editor would touch it; here's the ending: The "cruel, hideous aliens" turn out to be -- you guessed it -- the human race).

The rest, though, are classics. In "Naturally", a devil-conjurer who is a geometry nerd, calls forth the Devil ... but botches the pentagram. In "Blood" a pair of time-fleeing vampires seek safety -- and a good drink -- in the future, only to find the world populated by intelligent turnips. It's easy to go on, but the stories should be read -- not recapped.

Brown was, of course, proficient at longer, more serious and disturbing works, also represented here. "Arena" is included -- having been reprinted at one time in THE SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME (Vol. 1). STAR TREK fans may recall that "Arena" served as the basis for the Gorn episode, although the original story is quite different.

The rest of the tales (preceded by the title story, "Honeymoon in Hell") are packed full of cleverness, wit and style. This is an SF classic of "light reading".

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MURDERCON

By Richard Purtill
Doubleday, $10.95

REVIEWED BY TERRY CARR

The sub-genre of mystery novels set in the world of science fiction and its fandom dates back forty years to Anthony Boucher's ROCKET TO THE MORGUE and, a few years later, Wilson Tucker's THE CHINESE DOLL, each a delightful roman a clef in which well-known science fiction writers and fans appeared under recognizable variations of their own names. Mack Reynolds, in his 1951 novel, THE CASE OF THE LITTLE GREEN MEN, was the first writer to set a murder mystery in a science fiction convention (the murdered fan was "Bob Carr" and Reynolds told me at the time that that was an oblique reference to me). More recently, Gene DeWeese and Robert Coulson revived the murder-at-a-science-fiction-convention novel in NOW YOU SEE IT/HIM/THEM..., followed by _____* with SCI-FI.

This minor preoccupation with science fiction settings on the part of mystery writers isn't surprising. Many people who write mysteries also write science fiction and vice versa: The two genres are similar in their appeal to intellectual puzzles. Besides, traditional mystery novels tend to such a sameness of plot outline that writers often rely on colorful backgrounds and unusual characters to make their books different ... and the world of science fiction is certainly colorful, its characters unusual indeed.

With MURDERCON, a comparatively new science fiction writer enters the fray by setting loose a murderer at an unnamed science fiction convention in San Diego, California. Richard Purtill's novel introduces readers to a hotel full of people dressed up as Darth Vader and Princess Leia, hucksters selling ancient pulps at outrageous prices, panels discussing the role of academia in science fiction and fans playing LOGAN'S RUN games to the consternation of police officers searching for a real killer. The science fiction convention setting rings true, and if there's little in the book about nighttime room parties, the heart of any convention for most seasoned attenders, that omission is believable because the protagonist is someone who's never gone to a science fiction convention before.

**Terry asked me to fill in the author's name as he had forgotten it. Alas, so have I. --REG*

Athena Pierce is that hero; she is a middle-aged professor of philosophy who's recently sold her first science fiction novel to DAW Books. She's one of a roomful of people who witness the murder of a fan panelist by a figure hidden in a Darth Vader costume who apparently manages the killing with nothing more than a toy zapgun. Pierce becomes involved in the police investigation and naturally she soon finds herself in peril.

The outline of the plot presents no surprises; what keeps us reading is the convention setting combined with the mysteries of whodunnit and how. When the answers come, they're believable and just ingenious enough to fit the tinkertoy imaginations of most adolescent fans of all ages. The novel is an enjoyable light read.

Its disappointments for me, are mostly not the fault of the author, but rather of Doubleday's packaging and blurb copy. The jacket labels it as science fiction but it isn't that; it's a straight mystery novel packaged as science fiction to draw the attention of science fiction fans, to whom the convention setting will presumably be of interest. No doubt Doubleday is correct in this marketing approach; still, it's a bit of a cheat.

More disappointing is the blurb writer's promise that the book contains "some great science fiction "in jokes" -- if there are such delightful subtleties in the story, they went over my head; and since I have been a science fiction fan and professional for more than thirty years, I have to doubt that I missed anything like this.

True, one of the novel's pivots is the discovery of a "lost" Stanley G. Weinbaum story whose description perfectly fits one by Purtill himself ("Others' Eyes" in FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, May 1980) -- but this fact is mentioned in the jacket copy, thus removing its "in" joke appeal. And Purtill himself, like Athena Pierce, is a middle-aged philosophy professor whose first science fiction novel based on Greek myths, was published by DAW Books. But since writers so often base characters on themselves ("write about what you know"), this qualifies as a bland joke at best.

The blurb writer has done Purtill a greater disservice than merely promising more than the novel gives us: Because the blurb caused me to read with a careful eye to science fictional knowledge, I couldn't help noticing a glaring error committed by Purtill himself. The "lost" Weinbaum story was supposedly published in a virtually unknown magazine called KOSMOS TALES because Weinbaum was a friend of the editor at the time. Pierce phones Don Wollheim to ask about the magazine and he says, "It wasn't a Futurian magazine, but it was about the same period that some of us were trying to persuade pulp magazine publishers to let us start science fiction magazines".

The first Futurian-edited magazine was ASTONISHING STORIES, whose first issue was dated February, 1940. Stanley G. Weinbaum died in 1935. The dates simply won't wash. (And Purtill himself has done a disservice to Wollheim, who would have known this.)

There are a few other questionable details in the book, but never mind. If Purtill's scholarship about science fiction history isn't perfect, his knowledge and descriptions of science fiction conventions today are convincing enough. He's written a worthwhile if minor mystery novel about our world and if you find it on your library's shelves you won't regret the few hours it will take you to read it.

****

ALIEN CONCLUSIONS

Before I forget, below is a list of reviews-in-hand or spoken-for which will appear in the next issue. Reviewers, be so guided.

THE INDIANS WON
ANNOTATED TALES OF POE
A VISION OF DOOM
THE MYSTERIOUS WORLD: AN ATLAS OF THE UNEXPLAINED
ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S MYSTERIOUS WORLD
THE BORRIBLES GO FOR BROKE
DREAM PARK
WHERE TIME WINDS BLOW
THE CROSS OF FIRE
THE SWORDBEARER
WATER WITCH
SECOND NATURE
THE GARDENS OF DELIGHT
THE GOBLIN RESERVATION
BRIGADIER GERARD
THE MYRMIDDON PROJECT
SOFTWARE
AN F. MARION CRAWFORD COMPANION
THE ANNOTATED FRANKENSTEIN
MR. MONSTER'S MOVIE GOLD
THE BEST OF OMNI SF #3
THREE TOMORROWS
THE PRIDE OF CHANUR
THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT
CRUISER DREAMS
HORN CROWN
THE PARASITE
TO SAIL THE CENTURY SEA
THE WOUNDED LAND
THE STOLEN GODDESS
LOST WORLDS
TO CONQUER CHAOS
LEGIONS OF ANTARES
ALLIES OF ANTARES
THE LOST AND THE LURKING
FRIDAY

I know I was supposed to be thrilled at the once-in-a-hundred-years eclipse of the Moon by Earth's shadow...but...except for a fuzzy edge to the shadow, it just looked like a progression of the Moon's monthly phases in one hour. We were lucky, here in Portland, in having a clear night.

It's funny how the media can make you feel guilty for not going into a frenzy of gosh-wow over such essentially boring, ho-hum phenomena. And it could be that all the special effects of sf and fantasy movies the past few years have made me--and probably millions of others--terribly blase and sophisticated. Why, even when Mt. St. Helens went up, and I had a grandstand seat from our second floor window, I didn't watch it too long.

It's hard to say what would rivet my interest for hours on end. Maybe the end of the world---if it was on TV.

THE AMAZING STORY CONTINUES....

'We are well on our way to bringing AMAZING out of the minor leagues. The November issue has novelets by Silverberg and Williamson, short fiction by Wolfe, Webb, & I forget who else. Cover by Whelan. Other things bought include a Poul Anderson story, two by Tanith Lee, 4 short-shorts by Wolfe, a Benford novel, etc.'

---Darrell Schweitzer
letter, 6-27-82

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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #35 Interviews with Fred Saberhagen and Don Wollheim; "The Way It Is" by Barry Malzberg; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "Coming Apart at the Themes" by Bob Shaw.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #36 Interview with Roger Zelazny; A Profile of Philip K. Dick by Charles Platt; "Outside the Whale" by Christopher Priest; "Science Fiction and Political Economy" by Mack Reynolds; Interview with Robert A. Heinlein; "You Got No Friends in This World" by Orson Scott Card.

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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #37 Interview with Robert Anton Wilson; "We're Coming Through the Window!" by Barry N. Malzberg; "Inside the Whale" by Jack Williamson, Jerry Pournelle, and Jack Chalker; "Unities in Digression" by Orson Scott Card.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #38 Interview with Jack Williamson; "The Engines of the Night" by Barry N. Malzberg; "A String of Days" by Gregory Benford; "The Alien Invasion" by Larry Niven; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; SF News by Elton Elliott.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #39 Interview with Gene Wolfe; "The Engines of the Night"-Part Two by Barry N. Malzberg; "The Nuke Standard" by Ian Watson; "The Vivisector" by Darrell Schweitzer; SF News by Elton Elliott.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #40 Interview with Robert Sheckley; 4-way conversation: Arthur C. Clarke, Harlan Ellison, Fritz Leiber & Mark Wells; "The Engines of the Night"-Part Three by Barry N. Malzberg; Darrell Schweitzer; SF News by Elton T. Elliott

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #41 Space Shuttle Report by Clifford R. McMurray; "Chuck's Latest Bucket" by David Gerrold; Interview with Michael Whelan; "The Bloodshot Eye" by Gene DeWeese; "The Vivisector" by Darrell Schweitzer; SF News by Elton T. Elliott.

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